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# **NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL**

**MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA**

## **THESIS**

**THE FORGOTTEN INSURGENCY: IS THERE HOPE FOR  
COLOMBIA?**

by

Ricky M. Longhurst  
Jesus K. Lopez

December 2005

Thesis Advisor:  
Second Reader:

Robert O'Connell  
Douglas Borer

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**THE FORGOTTEN INSURGENCY: IS THERE HOPE FOR COLOMBIA?**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

**MASTER OF SCIENCE IN DEFENSE ANALYSIS**

from the

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## ABSTRACT

Colombia's four decades-old insurgency has been largely forgotten by the United States. With U.S. attention diverted towards Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Middle East, Colombia has undertaken a new strategy to deal with problems of the insurgents, paramilitaries, and narco-terrorists which have plagued the country since 1948. The current administration of Colombian President Alvaro Uribe has shifted strategy from one of negotiation and concessions to an active campaign to restore security and state control throughout Colombia. Under the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, the Uribe administration has made great strides against the insurgents and their supporters.

This thesis analyzes President Uribe's efforts to end the insurgency and those of his predecessor Andres Pastrana. It also analyzes U.S. aid in the form of *Plan Colombia* which is largely tied to counternarcotics efforts. The highest U.S. priority is to stem the flow of illegal narcotics from Colombia into the U.S. Colombia's priority is to restore security and state control first, thereby providing a stable foundation to battle the narcotraffickers. Uribe has shown there is hope for Colombia to end the insurgency through his efforts. The U.S. should shift its priorities to mirror Colombia's and thereby earn a valuable, peaceful, and stable partner in the Western hemisphere.



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# **I. INTRODUCTION**

## **A. BACKGROUND**

While pursuing its wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States has lost focus on other terrorist organizations and insurgencies around the world including the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). This group has been in existence for over forty years and poses a significant threat to U.S. interests in Colombia and to regional security/stability in Latin America. The FARC's stated goal is to establish a Marxist state in Colombia. According to its website, the group says it aims "to overcome the great economic, social, cultural, ethnic and political inequalities" in Colombia.<sup>1</sup> To accomplish their objectives, the FARC utilizes military and political expansion in rural areas, which the state has abandoned. Gaining control of territory is a key to controlling the population. In fact, this strategy has allowed the FARC to maintain and increase its political and military supremacy throughout many regions in the Colombian countryside which is where insurgents re-organize, gain momentum, and plan future attacks. Members of the FARC routinely coerce many of the poor citizens in the countryside to join the insurgency and advance their revolutionary cause.

Although the objectives of the governments of Colombia and the United States differ in some aspects; the major goals overlap somewhat. The greatest difference is the order of priority for each country. The primary U.S. objective is to prevent the flow of illegal drugs into the United States, the secondary and tertiary goals are to promote political and economic stability. The primary objectives of Colombia are to promote political and economic stability first; this would in turn help in the war against drugs. Both U.S. and Colombian objectives have also evolved over time from a strict counter narcotic focus to encompass counterterrorism activities. Essentially, the United States' objectives serve to treat the symptoms and not the disease. This thesis argues that U.S. objectives should mirror those of the Colombian government in their attempt to end the insurgency which in-turn will support the battle to stem the flow of illegal drugs.

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<sup>1</sup> FARC-EP online, available from <http://www.farcep.org>; Internet; accessed on 25 July 2005.



*Plan Colombia*, a six-year plan to end Colombia's long armed conflict, eliminate drug trafficking, and promote economic and social development was developed by former President Pastrana, is due to expire at the end of FY2005. The United States total fiscal commitment to *Plan Colombia*, including \$1.7 billion of Foreign Military Financing and Department of Defense central narcotics account, is \$4.5 billion. President Uribe (2002-present) has continued the work of *Plan Colombia*, but with an increased emphasis on security concerns. He initiated a strategic level campaign, called the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, to recapture the guerilla controlled territory and restore state control and presence in regions where it does not exist. This thesis argues that the United States would benefit significantly by supporting President Uribe's objective to regain the rural areas. Not only would this limit the insurgent's ability to recruit from the population, but it would also limit their ability to plan, mobilize, and execute future missions while residing in safe havens. Eliminating the support base for the insurgents is vital to defeating them. As such, the United States must shift its focus from primarily trying to eradicate narcotics trafficking to supporting the fight against the insurgents. Helping the Colombians eliminate the insurgency will go a long way towards winning the war on drugs and promoting political and economic stability in Latin America.

## **B. THESIS PURPOSE, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY, AND ORGANIZATION**

Colombia is plagued by more than one revolutionary group and paramilitary organization. However, this analysis focuses mainly on the FARC since it is the largest and most powerful of these organizations and as such, poses the greatest threat to the state. Where relevant, information is given on the other major insurgent and paramilitary groups, namely the National Liberation Army (ELN) and the United Colombian Self-Defense Organization (AUC). These other groups are important players in the insurgency and their role will be discussed as appropriate throughout the analysis. The insurgency is over forty years old and relevant historical background will be given on Colombia and the insurgency. The focus of the analysis, after background information is given, will be on actions taken by the most recent government administrations in Colombia and the U.S.

This thesis is based on the study of primary and secondary literature on the subject of Colombia and counterinsurgency. A relevant historical background will be given on Colombia and the FARC. The recent actions of the Pastrana and Uribe administrations in Colombia will be discussed as well as the FARC responses to these actions. In particular, *Plan Colombia* and the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* will be analyzed. Case studies of two successful counterinsurgencies (El Salvador and Peru) will be analyzed for any relevant lessons which may be applied to Colombia. This will be followed by the application of a counterinsurgency model to the current situation in Colombia as a method to analyze the current approach of the Colombian government. Best practices from successful counterinsurgencies throughout history will also be applied as a measuring stick for the effectiveness of Uribe's approach.<sup>2</sup> The thesis will conclude with specific recommendations for policy makers in Colombia and the United States based upon the research outlined here.

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<sup>2</sup> The counterinsurgency model used to analyze Colombia is taken from an article written by Dr. John A. Lynn entitled "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (July-August 2005), available on <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/JulAug05/lynn.pdf>>, accessed on 25 August 2005. The best practices from successful counterinsurgencies come from an article written by Dr. Kalev I Sepp entitled "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005.

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## II. BACKGROUND ON COLOMBIA AND THE INSURGENCY

### A. COMING OF THE INSURGENCY

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (*Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia*, or FARC) traces their roots back to the warfare of the late 1940's and were formally organized in the mid 1960's.<sup>3</sup> The FARC is the strongest and best organized of the leftist guerrilla groups which sprung up in Colombia during its four-decade-old insurgency crisis. The FARC was organized among peasants living in the remote and isolated mountainous areas between Bogotá and Cali.



Figure 1. Map of Colombia

In these rural areas, largely devoid of government presence, the FARC operate with freedom, continue to exert violence, and continually devour any hopes of a stable

<sup>3</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Current Issues and Historical Background*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2003), 33.

democracy in Colombia. That has not always been the case. A quick look at the history of Colombia indicates that there once was a flourishing economy, and stable government.

Historically, Colombia has had one of the most stable economies in Latin America. Unlike El Salvador, Nicaragua, or Guatemala, Colombia is a nation with a history of respected democratic institutions, robust international trade, sound and reliable economic institutions and industries, a respect for human life, community, family, and human rights, with a potentially bright future.<sup>4</sup> In fact, the economy enjoyed uninterrupted growth from 1932 until the mid-1990's—an exceptional performance even by the standards of developed countries.<sup>5</sup> However, the fall of coffee prices in the world market, and a complex political crisis, significantly affected the Colombian economy during the 1990's into the 21st century. Sadly, the economy grew just 1.6 percent in 2001, well below the five percent growth rate needed to substantially decrease poverty levels and unemployment—currently running at 64 percent and 20 percent of the population, respectively.<sup>6</sup> Moreover, the economy is hampered by an unequal distribution of income—the wealthiest 20 percent receive 55 percent of the national income, while 17 percent of the income is received by the lowest 50 percent.<sup>7</sup> Other contributing factors to the diminishing economy include U.S. sanctions leveled at Colombia during the Clinton administration, reduced business confidence, and the decertification by the United States.

The decertification of Colombia by the United States in 1996 was designed to cut-off particular types of aid that the country was receiving from the U.S. Types of aid included Foreign Military Financing, International Military Education and Training funds, investment guarantees for U.S. businesses through the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, and trade financing for U.S. business through the EXIM Bank.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Bob Graham, Brent Scowcroft and Michael Shifter, “Toward Greater Peace and Security in Colombia, Forging a Constructive U.S. Policy” (2000), available from <[http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward\\_greater\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_in\\_colombia.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward_greater_peace_and_security_in_colombia.html)>, accessed on 12 August 2005, 27.

<sup>5</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 4.

<sup>6</sup> William Aviles, “Institutions, Military Policy, and Human Rights in Colombia,” *Latin American Perspectives* (January 2001), 37.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Current Issues and Historical Background*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2003), 92.

The overall aim of the decertification was to put political pressure on the administration of President Ernesto Samper. The Clinton administration stated: “Samper had disregarded U.S. warnings of cartel contributions to his campaign; found that Colombia was not cooperating fully on counter-narcotics efforts; and cited limited cooperation by the Colombian government and ‘pervasive corruption’ under the Samper administration, and deemed the presidency untrustworthy.”<sup>9</sup> In addition, the on-going war on drugs within the country severely dampened the relationship with our Latin American neighbor as the United States became increasingly skeptical of corrupt government officials whose rhetoric against drugs was much stronger than their actions. Essentially, the combination of a declining economy, a drug war, and U.S. skepticism inevitably led to a weakened state that is now Colombia.

Colombia’s multiple problems stem from a state that no longer has the capacity to govern or perform key functions, and in many respects, negatively affects the Andean region not through its strength but through its weakness as a nation state. Corruption has damaged many of the country’s key institutions, including political parties and the Congress, judicial system, and the executive branch of the government.<sup>10</sup> A fundamental manifestation of a modern state is its “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force,” but Colombia today, in counterpoint to this classic definition, endures instead under conditions of “multiple sovereignty.”<sup>11</sup> Rempe contends: “A situation now exists between government, insurgent, and paramilitary forces in which: 1) competing interest groups are so violently opposed on highly salient issues that their differences cannot be reconciled within the current political system; and 2) two or more competing groups have sufficient resources—political, financial, organizational, military—to establish ‘sovereignty’ over a substantial political or military base, and thus seek to achieve their goals by force.”<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the situation in Colombia represents a broader global

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<sup>9</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Current Issues and Historical Background*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2003), 91.

<sup>10</sup> Bob Graham, Brent Scowcroft and Michael Shifter, “Toward Greater Peace and Security in Colombia, Forging a Constructive U.S. Policy” (2000), available from <[http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward\\_greater\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_in\\_colombia.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward_greater_peace_and_security_in_colombia.html)>, accessed on 12 August 2005, 9.

<sup>11</sup> Dennis Rempe, *The Past as a Prologue?: A History of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in Colombia, 1958-66*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 35.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

trend that is all too familiar in the current conflicts on-going in Iraq and Afghanistan where weakened states are riddled by insurgencies and violence. In a lecture to the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies in 2004, then U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell explained that, “we used to worry almost exclusively about the power of states. Today we also have to worry about the weakness of states—states that allow or can’t prevent insurgents from plotting mass murder on their soil, and states that provide the breeding ground for terrorist recruits.”<sup>13</sup> The violence, criminal activities, severe human rights and humanitarian problems, and corruption are to a great extent the product of a state that has not been capable of performing its most elementary functions—protecting its citizens and upholding the rule of law.<sup>14</sup> The Colombian government’s priority is to provide a secure environment in order to address the multiple fundamental problems. Rempe contends: “In the long run, policymakers must focus their efforts towards building a more democratic and inclusive society in Colombia, constructing a policy which recognizes that achieving state security ‘is not synonymous with the security of a nation.’ Ensuring state stability is vital, but an equal, long-term commitment to democratization, social reform, institutional development, and economic progress.”<sup>15</sup> An instable environment, combined with a government that has little to no influence, and a declining economy provides an insurgency such as the FARC with the exact ingredients needed to thrive. In the chaotic environment of Colombia, preconditions exist for a revolution where the FARC will continue to find a country ripe for control, violence, and terrorist operations.

The organization of FARC came on the heels of the period known as *La Violencia* or “The Violence” which occurred from 1948-1958. This violent period in Colombian history began with the assassination of Jorge Eliécer Gaitán on 9 April 1948. A leader of the liberal party, Gaitán’s murder set off a massive riot known as *El Bogotazo* and

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<sup>13</sup> Colin L. Powell, Keynote address to the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), 60th Anniversary Gala Dinner 13 October 2004. Embassy of the United States, London – UK Online, available from <<http://www.usembassy.org.uk/terror525.html>> (accessed 1 August 2005).

<sup>14</sup> Bob Graham, Brent Scowcroft and Michael Shifter, “Toward Greater Peace and Security in Colombia, Forging a Constructive U.S. Policy” (2000), available from <[http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward\\_greater\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_in\\_colombia.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward_greater_peace_and_security_in_colombia.html)>, accessed on 12 August 2005, 10.

<sup>15</sup> Dennis Rempe, *The Past as a Prologue?: A History of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in Colombia, 1958-66*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 36.

sparked a civil war between the two main political parties, the Liberals and Conservatives. Over a decade an estimated 200,000 people died, several others were displaced, and every region in Colombia was affected.<sup>16</sup> The end of *La Violencia* came in 1958 with the establishment of *Frente Nacional* (the National Front) where both parties signed an agreement which established a policy to alternate control of political power every four years. This agreement lasted sixteen years until 1974.

The FARC's origins can be traced to the mid-1960's where they banded together in a remote cluster of "independent republics" near the central Magdalena River valley. In the beginning, the leftist guerrilla organization espoused Marxist-Leninist ideology and aspired "to overcome the great economic, social, cultural, ethnic and political inequalities" in Colombia.<sup>17</sup> The FARC was determined to change the social structure in Colombia and reshape society by attracting the masses in an attempt to overthrow the current regime. However, no matter the inequities of economic, social, and political power, the population resisted change in the form of a revolution and sided with the established system of "elite democracy."<sup>18</sup> In an effort to obtain funds and attract forces the FARC decided to exploit the narcotics industry which paid huge dividends. The FARC is involved in every aspect of the narcotics supply chain with an estimated annual income today of over \$500 million.<sup>19</sup> The influx of money to the organization made it easy to attain recruits by the thousands.

The organization expanded slowly from the mid-1960's through the mid-1980's and were deemed a mere nuisance while drawing little attention from the government. The revolutionaries engaged in ambushes of military units or raids on farms with the objectives of securing equipment and food. The insurgents were essentially "out of sight, out of mind" until they began to pose a serious security threat to Bogotá and other urban areas. According to the FARC manifesto of May 1966, the insurgents were more

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<sup>16</sup> Colombia Human Rights Network Online, "An Overview of Recent Colombian History," available from <<http://colhrnet.igc.org/timeline.htm>>, accessed on 13 October 2005.

<sup>17</sup> FARC-EP online, available from <http://www.farcep.org>; Internet; accessed on 25 July 2005.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 7.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph R. Nuñez, *Fighting the Hobbesian Trinity in Colombia: A New Strategy for Peace*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2001), 8.



concerned about survival in the face of a determined effort by the Colombian army to eliminate it.<sup>20</sup> The FARC established a second and third guerilla front in 1969 and 1971 respectively in an early attempt at expansion. In the 1980s, the FARC began to implement an aggressive expansion strategy that was set at its 1982 Seventh Conference.<sup>21</sup> According to Dave Spencer, a veteran of both the El Salvadoran and Colombian conflicts, now one of the top U.S. specialists on insurgency:

The goal was the creation of a 28,000-man army divided into 48 guerrilla fronts. In 1982, FARC was just a small organization of 15 fronts with maybe 200 guerrilla fighters. By 1990 it had expanded its forces to 43 fronts with about 5,000 fighters. Now it has between 15-20,000 combatants in 60 fronts and mobile companies (these formations range from 60 to 400 individuals). This has allowed them to move to mobile or maneuver warfare, the use of large units capable of directly confronting military units of equal size, of overrunning installations and smaller units.<sup>22</sup>

The organizational structure of the FARC has evolved over time in the expansive sense, yet remains a hierarchical model. From day one, the FARC has been led by their commander, Manuel Marulanda Vélez, alias *Tirofijo* or “Sureshot,” however, overall command falls to a seven-man secretariat.<sup>23</sup> The secretariat coordinates the strategic aspects of the organization while each member also remains the leader of one of the seven large, regional bloques. Additionally, the secretariat reports to a central command, or the *Estado Mayor Central*, which currently incorporates approximately 25 members (the size has varied).<sup>24</sup> Below each bloque, approximately 66 fronts exist to execute local planning and operations. Commissions exist under each front. The Commission’s role is three-fold in that it exercises control over the local militia (which serve intelligence, logistics, extortion and financing, and propaganda), a mobile company (which represents the fronts personal offensive arm), and at least two columns. Each column is finally divided into two companies. Company guerrillas are uniformed soldiers who routinely

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<sup>20</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 24.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 7.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 79. Manuel Marulanda Vélez is the *nom de guerre* of Pedro Antonio Marín.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

execute tactical operations for the organization such as kidnappings, or attacks against civilian and/or government forces. The organizational structure of the FARC is depicted in Figure 2.

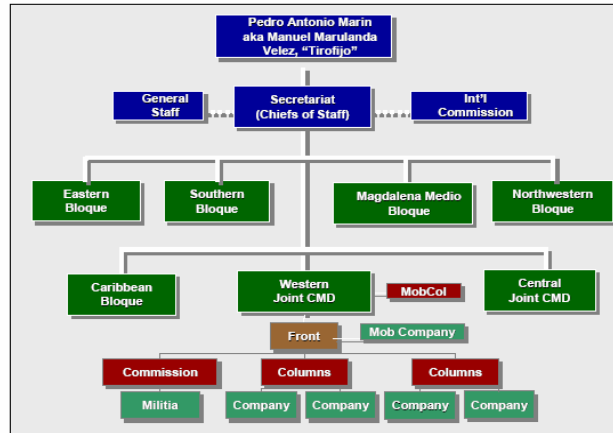


Figure 2. FARC Organizational Structure<sup>25</sup>

The organizational structure of the FARC allows for centralized control and decentralized execution. The fronts have the autonomy to commit acts of terrorism when and where they choose without the decision coming either directly from *Tirofijo* or his secretariat. Also, successfully targeting and capturing *Tirofijo* would not have as great an impact on the FARC as did the capture of the Shining Path of Peru's revolutionary leader Abimael Guzman. The capture of Guzman, which will be detailed later in this paper, essentially ended the Shining Path revolution. The FARC, with its several factions, would continue to operate and wreak havoc in Colombia.

## B. THE PASTRANA ADMINISTRATION AND THE FARC

President Pastrana assumed office in August 1998 and was not the first Colombian president to pursue negotiations with the insurgents. Pastrana believed the possibility of a negotiated peace with the FARC had a greater chance of success over previous efforts because of a widespread popular demand for peace and the recent involvement of Colombian business and civic groups in the peace process.<sup>26</sup> Pastrana pursued a three-pronged peace initiative: (1) to pursue peace talks with the insurgents, (2) to strengthen the Colombian military into a more effective fighting force, and (3) to

<sup>25</sup> Darren D. Sprunk, "Transformation in the Developing World: An Analysis of Colombia's Security Transformation" (Thesis, The Naval Postgraduate School, 2004), 31.

<sup>26</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 79.

secure international economic support, military assistance, and aid to institute social and political reform (*Plan Colombia*).<sup>27</sup> His administration, along with the Clinton administration in the United States, co-authored *Plan Colombia*. *Plan Colombia* will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter.

To show his good faith in the negotiation process, President Pastrana responded to the demands of the FARC that a demilitarized zone be created and that all Colombian security forces be withdrawn from this demilitarized zone. An area roughly the size of Switzerland with a population of approximately 96,000 was ceded over to the FARC.<sup>28</sup> In their study for RAND Corporation, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk have this to say about President Pastrana's attempts at negotiations:

The Pastrana administration staked a great deal of its credibility on the negotiation of a peace agreement with the country's major guerrilla organization, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). In November 1998, within four months of his inauguration, the President withdrew Colombian military forces from a 42,139 square kilometer "demilitarized zone" (*zona de despeje*) in south central Colombia, which the FARC demanded as a condition for negotiations. Although the idea of negotiations enjoyed considerable support, Pastrana's approach entailed substantial political costs, including the resignation of Defense Minister Rodrigo Lloreda in May 1999, and stresses between the government and the military. Lloreda objected to the negotiating approach articulated by Pastrana's negotiator, which implied the indefinite FARC control of the *zona de despeje*. Despite government concessions, the FARC continued the attacks on government and infrastructure targets, kidnappings, and other acts of violence and disruption.<sup>29</sup>

This *zona de despeje* proved to be a windfall for the FARC. They now had a sanctuary where they could operate with impunity. They could train, rest, refit their forces, move

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<sup>27</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 79.

<sup>28</sup> Gabriel Marcella, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey From Ambiguity To Strategic Clarity*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2003), 35.

<sup>29</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 3.

drugs and arms and hold prisoners and hostages. This area became a staging base for FARC operations into the surrounding areas outside of the demilitarized zone.<sup>30</sup>

The concessions made by the Pastrana administration to the FARC did not result in any negotiated peace settlements. The FARC really had no incentive to actively pursue peace negotiations; they were not in danger of being defeated by Colombian government forces. In fact, the demilitarized zone given up by the Pastrana administration had only served to strengthen the FARC. Both sides continued in the negotiation process because they each had an interest in the peace process. The Pastrana administration had staked its credibility on the negotiations and the FARC hoped to gain legitimacy, domestic and international stature, and achieve strategic and operational advantages.<sup>31</sup> Probably the greatest advantage gained by the FARC was the ability to operate freely within the demilitarized zone.

### **C. THE URIBE ADMINISTRATION AND THE FARC**

Dario E. Teicher, author of *The Decisive Phase of Colombia's War on Narco-Terrorism* says, "In early 2002, the final days of Colombian President Andres Pastrana's administration were marred by an unending internal war against right wing and leftist narco-terrorists and criminal cartels. During his administration the narco-terrorists reached their zenith of power."<sup>32</sup> This was the legacy that President Alvaro Uribe inherited when he assumed office in August of 2002. President Uribe was elected on a platform of an uncompromising hard-line stance towards the insurgency.<sup>33</sup> Uribe's focus was improving internal security. Officially released in June 2003, the plan titled *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* outlined his priorities for Colombia. Uribe's plan was built upon these three basic tenets:

1. A lack of personal security is at the roots of Colombia's social, economic, and political ills.

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<sup>30</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 43.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 78.

<sup>32</sup> Dario E. Teicher, *The Decisive Phase of Colombia's War on Narco-Terrorism*, (Maxwell AFB, AL: USAF Counterproliferation Center, Air University, 2005). 2.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 5.

2. This lack of personal security stems from the absence of the state in large swaths of the national territory.
3. Therefore, all elements of national power need to be directed towards ending this lack of national integration.<sup>34</sup>

President Uribe came into office keenly aware of the dynamic synergy of insurgency, narco-trafficking, kidnapping, illicit arms dealing, extortion and homicide. His main course of action was to consolidate control of national territory.<sup>35</sup>

President Uribe realized that a top-down strategic approach was necessary if the government of Colombia was to gain ground against the insurgents. Uribe's *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* provided the strategic approach the Colombian government would use. It contains the following strategic objectives:<sup>36</sup>

1. Consolidation of state control throughout Colombia
2. Protection of the population
3. Elimination of the illegal drugs trade in Colombia
4. Maintenance of a deterrent capability
5. Transparent and efficient management of resources

The *Democratic and Security Defense Policy* will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, but it is essential to note that President Uribe has taken an entirely different approach in dealing with the insurgency than did his predecessor. Fortunately for Uribe, the military had taken the initiative and began transforming itself to better cope with the insurgency during the administration of President Pastrana.<sup>37</sup>

The new military leadership which emerged during the Pastrana administration realized the only way to successfully counter the FARC was through transformation of

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<sup>34</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for "Democratic Security,"* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), 7.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>36</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense*, available from <[http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos\\_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf](http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf)>, accessed 13 July 2005, 31-32.

<sup>37</sup> Marks, 6.

the existing military structure.<sup>38</sup> Thomas A. Marks says the following about the Colombian military's transformation:

They had crafted their approach based upon the neutralization of FARC's strategy, even as they instituted a far-reaching and comprehensive military reform process that affected everything from recruiting (a largely draftee COLAR became one-third volunteer, with key units essentially 100 percent "professionals"), to military schooling, to assignment policies, to structure, to operational art. The result was a reclaiming of the strategic initiative by the Uribe advent.<sup>39</sup>

Thus, President Uribe inherited a military already on its way to transforming itself into a more effective counterinsurgency force. Uribe chose to take the fight to the insurgents by denying them safe havens and restoring state control where previously there had been none. By mid-2002, Uribe had a military more capable of implementing his plan to restore security and democracy.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for "Democratic Security,"* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), 3.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 6.

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### **III. FARC ADAPTATION AND GOVERNMENT RESPONSES**

#### **A. CURRENT FARC STRATEGY AND TACTICS**

The strategy and tactics of the FARC have evolved since the beginning of the insurgency. As the FARC slowly expanded between the 1960s and 1980s, so did their level of combat capability and their ability to progress toward larger and more complex operations. During this period, it was common for the guerrillas to engage in ambushes of military units, raids on farms, or kidnappings. The main objectives were capturing military equipment, securing food and supplies, capturing hostages, and settling scores with informers.<sup>41</sup> Additionally, the FARC remained in relative rural isolation obscured from the Colombian army thus avoiding direct confrontations that could limit the ability of the guerrillas to grow. After the Seventh Guerrilla Conference (1982), the FARC began to refocus its aims and its structure from those of a bandit organization (hit and run tactics) to those of an aspiring guerrilla *army* (more traditional conventional attacks), now being able to concentrate its forces by employing coordinated “multi-front” attacks of several hundred men against specific, vulnerable targets including military bases. In one attack during March 1998, approximately 700 FARC fighters ambushed the 52nd counter-guerrilla battalion of the Colombian Army’s 3rd Mobile Brigade stationed at El Billar, south of the Caqueta department. The surprise attack caused the battalion heavy casualties where over 60 were killed and some 40 were taken prisoner. Similar attacks occurred throughout the late 1990s into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. These attacks would exploit existing vulnerabilities in rural military bases and showcase the guerrilla groups’ strength in the eyes of the Colombian government and the international community. The FARC’s move to maneuver warfare, consisting of what have been called medium-size unit concentrations, is considered to be potentially more flexible against Colombian military with more devastating results. In fact, twice as many people are murdered each year in this country of less than 40 million as in the entire United States with its population of roughly 280 million.<sup>42</sup> According to the United Nations, Colombia’s population of 1.5

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<sup>41</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 24.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Colombian Army Adaptation to FARC Insurgency*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002), 2.



million internally displaced people is the third largest in the world, following Sudan and Angola.<sup>43</sup> Between 1996 and 2000, some 800,000 Colombians left their country, many to the United States, Canada, Europe, and other Latin American countries because of the FARC.<sup>44</sup> For many, conditions were simply too dangerous in Colombia. Human rights abuses are among the most prevalent in the hemisphere. In the past decade, the conflict claimed more than 35,000 Colombian lives.<sup>45</sup> The increased growth of the FARC that enabled these multi-front attacks against the Colombian military and continued violence toward civilians is due to a number of conditions.

The FARC engages in numerous activities to raise money including kidnapping. Over the past decade, the FARC has kidnapped a presidential candidate, a senator, a bishop, and a governor, to just name a few; and averages over 3,200 kidnappings per year.<sup>46</sup> It is difficult to establish the amount of income earned by the FARC for kidnappings. However, the *National Human Development Report: Solutions to Escape the Conflict's Impasse 2003*, published by the United Nations Development Program, estimates the annual income received from kidnappings is approximately \$32 million dollars, or approximately 10 percent of their total income.<sup>47</sup> The practice of kidnapping makes the FARC easier to label as a terrorist organization. *The 2001 Report on Foreign Terrorist Organizations* released by the U.S. Department of State included the FARC for the first time.<sup>48</sup> At this point, the FARC fell under the Bush administration's Global War on Terrorism. According to the 2002 National Security Strategy of the United States, President Bush states: "In Colombia, we recognize the link between the terrorist and extremist groups that challenge the security of the state and drug trafficking activities that

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<sup>43</sup> Bob Graham, Brent Scowcroft and Michael Shifter, "Toward Greater Peace and Security in Colombia, Forging a Constructive U.S. Policy" (2000), available from <[http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward\\_greater\\_peace\\_and\\_security\\_in\\_colombia.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/3828/toward_greater_peace_and_security_in_colombia.html)>, accessed on 12 August 2005, 7.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Julia E. Sweig, "What Kind of War for Colombia?," *Foreign Affairs* (September/October 2002).

<sup>47</sup> United Nations Development Program, *National Human Development Report: Solutions to Escape the Conflict's Impasse 2003*, table 12.1., available from <<http://www.pnud.org.co/2003/EnglishVersion/Chapter12.pdf>>, accessed 11 August 2005.

<sup>48</sup> U.S. Department of State online, *2001 Report on Foreign Terrorist*, available from <<http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/rpt/fto/2001/5258.htm>>, accessed 11 August 2005.

help finance the operations of such groups.”<sup>49</sup> The fact is that the kidnappings of United States citizens and many other countries’ citizens provokes international backlash against the FARC which only hurts the organization’s cause. However, in the FARC’s view, kidnappings continue to provide a valuable source of income.

A second and more lucrative source of income for the FARC is narcotics and extortion. Since the 1980s, the FARC has become involved in every step of the narcotics supply chain including taxation of every facet of the drug trade. The same United Nations National Human Development report estimates the FARC’s revenue from drug trafficking to be \$204 million dollars or 61 percent of their annual income.<sup>50</sup> Colombia provides some 80 percent of the cocaine entering the United States and produces some 70 percent of the world’s total.<sup>51</sup> Proceeds from narco-trafficking allow the FARC to train, equip, recruit, and enjoy power in a country where little authority exists. In addition, drug revenues minimize the need for widespread popular support because the narcotics money finances their logistical requirements.

Narcotics not only provide a tremendous source of income and power for the FARC, but are an important recruitment means as well. The poor economic condition of the country leaves many youth with few opportunities. Child soldiers (members under the age of 18) comprise a great deal of FARC recruits which are estimated at over 6,000.<sup>52</sup> The youth are motivated by a desperate desire to escape the poverty that afflicts the vast majority of ordinary Colombians including their families. As many of the adolescents choose or are forced to join the insurgency, many of their families decide to cultivate coca. In either case, the increased prospect of financial relief and freedom exists to the youth who join the revolution, and the land owners who are pressured into farming coca crops. In return the FARC says that it provides protection, a term that can be construed

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<sup>49</sup> U.S. Department of State online, *National Security Strategy of the United States, 2002*. available from <<http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/15538.pdf>>, accessed 11 August 2005, 10.

<sup>50</sup> United Nations Development Program, *National Human Development Report: Solutions to Escape the Conflict’s Impasse 2003*, table 12.1., available from <<http://www.pnud.org.co/2003/EnglishVersion/Chapter12.pdf>>, accessed 11 August 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Gabriel Marcella, “The U.S. Engagement with Colombia: Legitimate State Authority and Human Rights,” *The North-South Agenda* (March 2002), available from <<http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/mag02/mag02.pdf>>, accessed 12 August 2005, 7.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 2.

as extortion or as quasi-governmental control. Extortion is estimated to provide the FARC with \$96 million or approximately 29 percent of their annual income.<sup>53</sup> As Francisco E. Thoumi explains in his work, *Illegal Drugs, Economy, and Society in the Andes*, the entire scheme of the drug trade in Colombia deeply affects the identity of the country. He states:

Drugs have influenced the Andean countries' social, political, and economic systems; they have determined how people do business, the role these countries play in the international economic and political system, the way domestic politics is practiced, and how people look at themselves.<sup>54</sup>

For the FARC, although the drug trade touches all aspects of Colombian social, political, and economic life, narco-trafficking is a major factor in the overall grand strategy.

FARC activities over the past decade indicate their desire to follow the strategic plan implemented during their *Seventh Conference* in 1982. Drawing from the writings in the *Colombian Labyrinth*, Rabasa and Chalk state the following as the FARC's grand strategy:<sup>55</sup>

1. First, to consolidate its control of coca-growing regions in the southern and eastern part of the country. Control of the resources in these areas enables the guerrillas to build up their military capabilities and push into other areas.
2. Second, to expand the theater of operations to the entire country, so as to force the government to disperse its forces and reduce its ability to regain the military initiative. At the same time, the guerrillas seek to expand into economically strategic areas, such as the middle Magdalena valley and the central highlands. To do this, the FARC is striving to control a number of strategic corridors that link the FARC's base in the *zona de despeje* to the Pacific coast and to northeastern Colombia and the Venezuelan border and

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<sup>53</sup> United Nations Development Program, *National Human Development Report: Solutions to Escape the Conflict's Impasse 2003*, table 12.1., available from <<http://www.pnud.org.co/2003/EnglishVersion/Chapter12.pdf>>, accessed 11 August 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Francisco E. Thoumi, *Illegal Drugs, Economy, and Society in the Andes*. (Washington D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2003), 1.

<sup>55</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 39-41.

permit the rapid movement of troops, arms, and supplies across the country. (See Figure 3.) Some of the most intense fighting over the past two years has been over control of these corridors.

3. Third, to isolate the capital, Bogotá, and other major cities. Perched at 6000 feet on the western slope of the eastern cordillera of the Andes, Bogotá is dependent on a few easily interdicted roads for land communications with the external world. The FARC and the ELN regularly sever road communications between the capital and the Atlantic coast, the Amazonian region, and the eastern plains.
4. The final stage in the FARC's strategy would be a move to large-scale offensive operations, culminating in a general uprising. To this end, the FARC has been building urban support networks in Bogotá and other cities. The FARC's new phase of warfare (multi-front attacks) includes the use of 60mm and 81mm mortars and homemade bombs fired from a tube, known as cylinder bombs.



Figure 3. Rabasa & Chalk, Figure 4.1<sup>53</sup>

A significant reason for the FARC's ability to execute their grand strategy and enjoy continued success in Colombia is because of their extremely profitable financial resources via kidnapping, narcotics, and extortion, which allows them to rely less on popular support. Additionally, as mentioned above, the FARC leadership is committed to executing the grand strategy drawn up almost 25 years ago. However, the implementation of *Plan Colombia*, and the hard-line approach taken by the Uribe administration may force the FARC to alter their strategies if they want to remain in existence.

## **B. PLAN COLOMBIA**

*Plan Colombia* was developed by former Colombian President Pastrana as a six-year plan to end the country's 40-year old armed insurgency, battle narcotics trafficking, and to promote economic and social development.<sup>56</sup> The primary portion of the United States' support of *Plan Colombia* is the Andean Counterdrug Initiative (ACI). Colombia also receives assistance from the United States in the form of Foreign Military Financing (FMF) and money from the Department of Defense's (DOD) central counternarcotics account. ACI funding for *Plan Colombia* from fiscal years 2000 through 2005 has totaled approximately \$2.8 billion.<sup>57</sup> When FMF and DOD funding is included, the total amount of U.S. support is \$4.5 billion.<sup>58</sup> Since funding for *Plan Colombia* expires at the end of fiscal year 2005, the Bush administration has requested an additional \$463 million in ACI and \$90 million in FMF for fiscal year 2006.<sup>59</sup>

From the United States' perspective, *Plan Colombia* was an initiative to stem the flow of illegal narcotics into the United States by taking the fight to the world's main source of coca production, Colombia. The heart of proposal in the early years (2000 and 2001) was the "Push into Southern Colombia" program.<sup>60</sup> Coca cultivation had been expanding rapidly in southern Colombia and the guerrillas were behind much of this increased coca cultivation and related activities. The majority of the funding for this

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<sup>56</sup> Connie Veillette, "CRS Report for Congress," *Colombia: Issues for Congress* (2005), 1.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, Summary page.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Current Issues and Historical Background*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2003), 49.

program was to be spent on organizing, training, and equipping two counternarcotics battalions. The funding allocated for these two battalions was \$600 million for fiscal years 2000 and 2001 combined.<sup>61</sup>

Prior to the passage of any legislation appropriating funds for *Plan Colombia*, the U.S. Congress placed conditions on the government and military of Colombia to be eligible to receive money. Six conditions and one restriction were added to *Plan Colombia* by Congress.<sup>62</sup> There was a limitation placed on the use of helicopters provided by *Plan Colombia* funding. Any use of a helicopter(s) to aid and abet the operations of the illegal self-defense groups would result in the helicopter(s) being returned to the United States. A U.S. personnel cap was placed at no more than 500 total military personnel and no more than 300 civilian contractors. A funding cap was set for DOD counternarcotics funds. Another limitation was the limit on the use of DOD funds to the types allowable in the legislation. Basically the limitations allowed only non-lethal assistance like protective and security equipment, repair parts, software, and related items. Another restriction prohibited the issuance of visas to any person “credibly alleged to have provided direct or indirect support for the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), the National Liberation Army (ELN), or the United Colombian Self-Defense organization (AUC), including conspiracy to allow, facilitate, or promote the illegal activities of such groups.”<sup>63</sup> The last two restrictions dealt with population planning and the prohibition of the use of any funds for *Plan Colombia* other than those appropriated by the legislation enacting *Plan Colombia*.<sup>64</sup>

Other stipulations put into the legislation by Congress before the obligation of funds for *Plan Colombia* dealt with human rights issues. The human rights criteria stipulated that the President of Colombia bring to justice any member of the Colombian military guilty of human rights abuses. The Colombian Armed Forces and its Commander General were also required to self-police and bring to justice any person alleged to have committed human rights abuses or to have aided or abetted paramilitary

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<sup>61</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Current Issues and Historical Background*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2003), 49.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 56.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 57.

groups. The Colombian government and military was also supposed to cooperate fully with civilian authorities in investigating, prosecuting, and punishing anyone guilty of human rights abuses.<sup>65</sup> The U.S. Congress placed these human rights compliance stipulations on Colombia to minimize public and international backlash against the U.S. government for appearing to support an abusive and oppressive regime. The U.S. was highly criticized during its early involvement in El Salvador for supporting a regime which committed extensive human rights abuses. This topic will be dealt with in more detail in a subsequent chapter.

U.S. policy has evolved over time from a strictly counternarcotics focus to also allow *Plan Colombia* funds to be used to conduct counterterrorist operations. In 2002, Congress approved legislation which expanded authority to use U.S. counternarcotics funds in a unified campaign against both drug trafficking and terrorist organizations in Colombia.<sup>66</sup> The three largest illegally armed organizations in Colombia—the leftist FARC, ELN, and the rightist—AUC have all been designated foreign terrorist organizations by the State Department.<sup>67</sup>

### **C. ASSESSMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

Strides have been made in drug eradication and internal security within Colombia, but there has been no measurable change to the availability of illegal drugs in the U.S. In her 2005 Congressional Research Service (CRS) report, *Plan Colombia: A Progress Report*, Connie Veillette is critical of *Plan Colombia*'s success at stemming illegal drugs flowing into the U.S. She says, "Despite increased eradication of drug crops and interdiction efforts under *Plan Colombia*, U.S. government agencies responsible for tracking drug trends report that the availability, price, and purity of cocaine and heroin in the United States have remained stable."<sup>68</sup> Drug eradication efforts have indeed resulted in the destruction of thousands of acres of illicit drug crops. Unfortunately, many of the drug crops that have been eradicated either manually or via aerial spraying have just been replanted. Data from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) for the year

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<sup>65</sup> Nina M. Serafino, *Colombia: Current Issues and Historical Background*, (New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2003), 58.

<sup>66</sup> Connie Veillette, "CRS Report for Congress," *Plan Colombia: A Progress Report* (2005), 3.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

2004 show that the total area under cultivation for coca has remained stable. The same report argues that although the total area cultivated for coca has remained stable, coca production has actually diminished slightly from 460 metric tons in the previous year to 430 metric tons because the newly-planted crops are not as productive.<sup>69</sup> This has only forced a shift of the growing to other regions within Colombia or movement of cultivation to other nations.

Violence and crime have decreased in Colombia, but it still reports one of the highest (if not the highest) kidnapping rates in the world. According to Connie Veillette's progress report, public safety conditions have improved and more police have been redeployed to areas from which they had been driven out by armed insurgents.<sup>70</sup> Colombians feel safer now, but internal security remains a tremendous problem and the ongoing insurgency coupled with the narcotrafficking continues to exacerbate the problem.

#### **D. DEMOCRATIC SECURITY AND DEFENSE POLICY**

In 2002 President Alvaro Uribe realized that *Plan Colombia*, by itself, would be insufficient to solve Colombia's problems. Upon taking office, he directed that the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* for Colombia be drafted and enacted. The *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* is the strategic road map for Colombia to restore order and the legitimacy of the state's institutions. President Uribe sets the tone for the policy by saying,

Security is not achieved simply through the efforts of the Armed Forces and the National Police. This is an effort of the entire State and of all Colombians. A strong state structure, supported by citizen solidarity, guarantees the rule of law and the respect of rights and civil liberties.<sup>71</sup>

President Uribe put the Ministry of Defense in charge of conceptualizing the framework of democratic security and defense. Defense Minister Marta Lucia Ramirez de Rincon in turn realized she needed not just military expertise, but also help from the other branches of government. She assembled a team comprised of members of the

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<sup>69</sup> Connie Veillette, "CRS Report for Congress," *Plan Colombia: A Progress Report* (2005), 5-6.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 3

<sup>71</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense, available from <<http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/Descargas/Documentos/Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf>>, accessed 13 July 2005, 7.



Ministry of Defense, the armed forces, the War College, and the National Police to analyze and design the best solutions to the country's security problems.<sup>72</sup> The Defense Minister also brought together representatives from all the other government ministries to ensure the plan incorporated all the necessary state institutions for greater coordination and a consolidated approach. Several drafts of the security policy were sent out to various members of Colombian society for feedback and critique. Comments and opinions were received from intellectuals, academics, private sector representatives and from many other walks of life.<sup>73</sup> They also used feedback from the regional security councils regularly held by the President. This allowed feedback from the local and regional governments "who suffer first hand the effects of terrorism and insecurity."<sup>74</sup>

Defense Minister Ramirez says this of the process used to develop the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*:

This represents a radical change. We Colombians have long thought that citizens' security was a problem for the National Police and the Armed Forces. For years there was a great vacuum in the activity of other state institutions in some critical areas of our geography and our democracy. It is precisely that vacuum that explains the growth of the drugs business and consequently of the terrorist organizations in large areas of our country. That is why the achievement of complete state territorial control, so as to guarantee the rule of law and democratic governance, is one of the pillars of this policy.<sup>75</sup>

It is evident that the Government of Colombia realizes the need for interagency and interdepartmental coordination and integration to ensure effective implementation of the policy. They realize that it is not just a military problem, but a problem that involves every one of the government's institutions. The Colombian government has also realized that in order to be successful, continuity of the policy will be necessary over a long period of time.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense*, available from <[http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos\\_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf](http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf)>, accessed 13 July 2005, 8.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., 10.

“The general objective of the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* is to strengthen and guarantee the rule of law throughout Colombia, through the reinforcement of democratic authority.”<sup>77</sup> The policy stresses the importance of territorial control and coordinated actions of all the institutions of the state. Another important facet of the policy is the emphasis on the proper functioning of the judicial system. Dr. Luz E. Nagle a former judge in Medellin, Colombia (and now a law professor in the United States because of repeated assassination attempts in Colombia) is extremely critical of the judicial and legal system in her homeland. In her work, *The Search for Accountability and Transparency in Plan Colombia: Reforming Judicial Institutions—Again*, she says, “One of the most important priorities of *Plan Colombia* is to strengthen the nation’s judicial institutions, since so much of the survival of Colombia is dependent on the judiciary’s ability to reimpose the rule of law while protecting the rights and enforcing the obligations of both citizens and foreign investment.”<sup>78</sup> The *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* addresses many of the issues that Dr. Nagle points out as critical problems in her work. Only time will tell if the reforms instituted by the policy will succeed.

## **E. SIX COURSES OF ACTION**

The cornerstones of the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* are the six courses of action designed to fulfill the strategic objectives of the policy. The six courses of action are: coordinating state action, strengthening state institutions, consolidating control of national territory, protecting the rights of all Colombians and the nation’s infrastructure, cooperating for the security of all, and communicating state policy and action. All of the following information is taken from the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*:<sup>79</sup>

### **1. Coordinating State Action**

In this area, the policy addresses what is termed perhaps the most critical area affecting state response to citizens’ security—lack of effective coordination between state

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<sup>77</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense, available from <[http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos\\_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf](http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf)>, accessed 13 July 2005, 12.

<sup>78</sup> Luz E. Nagle, *The Search for Accountability and Transparency in Plan Colombia: Reforming Judicial Institutions—Again*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2001), 6.

<sup>79</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional, 33-61.

institutions. The policy establishes the National Defense and Security Council which will be the forum where the President will liaise with his ministers, the armed forces, and the national police. The council will issue directives, supervise the implementation of each, and evaluate the results. Regional authorities will also set up similar councils at the local level to ensure policy implementation down to the most local level possible. The policy also establishes a Joint Intelligence Committee to coordinate among the state's intelligence services. The idea is to consolidate strategic level intelligence, eliminate interagency turf battles, and eliminate redundancy. Again, regional intelligence committees will be set up at local levels to accomplish the same tasks down at the local level. The policy places the Ministry of Defense as the lead agency for implementing and coordinating the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*. The Ministry of Defense is also put in charge of logistics and resources for implementing the policy. Interagency support structures will also be established to coordinate and facilitate the work of regional and local state bodies and judicial authorities. These structures also provide a mechanism to ensure that the justice system is effective, remains within the law, and upholds human rights.

## **2. Strengthening State Institutions**

The major component of the policy here is to overhaul and strengthen the judicial system, the armed forces, the national police, intelligence, and state finances. Judicial reforms include amending the constitution to aid in the fight against violent crimes such as homicide and kidnapping. The country's prisons will be upgraded and improved. Probably most important among the judicial reforms will be reform of the public prosecutors office and providing better access to *Casas de Justicia y Paz* for those who live in rural and remote areas. Armed forces reforms include professionalization of the military and reform of compulsory military service. Colombian law used to exempt anyone with a high school education or higher from combat. This left fighting primarily up to the poor and uneducated peasant classes. The policy changes that law to not exempt those with a higher education from combat service. The policy also allocates more and better resources to the armed forces. The strengthening of the national police includes: extending coverage to more municipalities, increase of patrols in rural areas, the creation of new mobile *Carabinero* Squadrons, building and fortifying rural police

stations, strengthening the highway police, creating regular auxiliaries, and promoting the work of and collaboration with civic police. The strengthening of intelligence includes not only the creation of the Joint Intelligence Committee mentioned earlier, but the strengthening of all intelligence apparatus at the strategic, operational, and tactical level. The horizontal exchange of information between agencies and the emphasis on counterintelligence capability is also delineated. A major problem in Colombia is collection of taxes and the policy seeks to correct this issue. A referendum and tax reforms as well as an effort to minimize duplication of effort at all levels of the government is meant to boost the financial stature of the government. Severe penalties for tax evasion will be imposed as well as the strengthening of the National Customs and Taxation Directorate to enforce tax collection.

### **3. Consolidating Control of National Territory**

“Consolidating state control over the country will be a gradual but continuous process of containing, dismantling and deterring the illegal armed groups, protecting the population, and reestablishing the authority of democratic institutions. The idea is to create a virtuous circle of long term recovery and consolidation which will gradually restore an atmosphere of security throughout the country.” The emphasis is on the recovery, maintenance, and consolidation of state control over territory where there is no state presence. An integrated plan for border security, urban security, and the elimination of the illegal narcotics trafficking trade is also discussed. The framework of dealing with the narcotics issue relies on the revamped state institutions such as the armed forces, National Police, and judicial system.

### **4. Protecting the Rights of Colombians and the Nation’s Infrastructure**

“The basic mechanism for protecting the lives and rights of Colombian citizens is the strengthening of the rule of law over Colombian territory.” The policy also identifies “persons at risk” such as, mayors, councilors, community leaders, political activists, journalists, and human rights activists that may require special attention. The policy discusses victims of forced displacement due to the illegal armed groups in Colombia and programs to restore lost land to peoples who were wrongfully stripped of their land by these illegally armed groups. The problems of terrorism, kidnapping, and extortion are also discussed in this section. Again, the framework to achieve these objectives is the

strengthening of the state's institutions and by establishing public confidence and faith in those institutions. The problem of child combatant demobilization and protection against the recruitment of children and adolescents into the ranks of the illegally armed groups is also addressed. The government has invited all combatants, child and adult alike, the opportunity to lay down their arms. Every effort will be made to reintegrate former combatants back into society. Protection of the economic infrastructure is detailed. The importance of the protection of coal, electricity, oil and telecommunications infrastructure, as well as ports and airport is stressed. The armed forces and police forces are given the charge of protecting these vital areas. The Government Road Security Program is introduced here and its aim is to guarantee the safe passage for all passengers and goods on Colombia's highways.

#### **5. Cooperating for the Security of All**

The security of solidarity, cooperation networks, and reward programs will be established to encourage the voluntary and patriotic cooperation of Colombian citizens. Regional security committees will be established which will enlist the support of civil society to prevent and punish crimes. Cooperation networks will be established both in urban and rural areas to help provide authorities information about crimes and to help in the pursuit of criminals. In essence, it will function like a "neighborhood watch" program. A monetary reward program will be set up to reward those who provide information leading to the prevention of a terrorist attack or the arrest of members of any of the illegally armed groups. The same incentives shall exist for those who provide information about illegal narcotics traffickers. The need for international cooperation is also discussed. The policy recognizes the need to get regional actors as well as other affected international actors involved in increasing security. After all, it is not just Colombia that has a stake in this issue. The fight against terrorism and illegal narcotics trafficking is a problem that plagues just about every country in the world.

#### **6. Communicating State Policy and Action**

"Terrorism is a form of political violence which uses communication to spread fear and terror in both urban and rural areas. Terrorist action reflects neither military nor political strength, but rather the weakness of those who do not have the support of the people and try to impose their will through terror. It is an empty strength. The

government will keep the public fully informed of developments in all areas relating to the Defense and Democratic Security Policy in order to boost confidence and encourage citizen cooperation and solidarity.” The policy calls not only on the government for the responsible handling of information, but the media as well. It implores the media to use restraint when releasing information that may endanger lives or jeopardize operations. “The government, through its Foreign Service and military and police attachés, will undertake an exercise in public diplomacy to explain the nature of the Colombian problem in its Latin American, hemispheric and international context. Above all, Colombia requires strong institutions which will fill the vacuum of authority, protect the population, guarantee their rights, reduce poverty and allow the economy to prosper.”

#### **F. ASSESSMENT OF OBJECTIVES**

Dr. Thomas A. Marks, in his monograph *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for “Democratic Security,”* says the following about President Uribe’s *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*:

Upon taking office in August 2002, President Alvaro Uribe Velez of Colombia was faced with a difficult strategic situation that required a fresh approach. This was forthcoming in a *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* which radically reoriented the state posture towards its principal security challenge—an insurgency inextricably linked to the narcotics trade and other criminal activity. Previously committed to negotiation, the government opted for counterinsurgency. Though multifaceted in its dimensions, the new policy effectively assigned the cutting edge role to the Colombian armed forces (COLMIL), most prominently the dominant service, the army (COLAR). This required that the forces aggressively pursue a well-funded, entrenched adversary within a complex international environment decidedly hostile to state efforts at stability operations. This they have done in impressive fashion.<sup>80</sup>

As noted previously, President Uribe was fortunate that Colombia’s military forces had already begun the transformation process to better handle counterinsurgency while President Pastrana was still in office. Thus, Uribe inherited a military already on the way to becoming an effective counterinsurgency force.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for “Democratic Security,”* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), v.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid., 1.

The military recognized the need to reorganize and reorient itself. “They had crafted their approach based upon the neutralization of FARC’s strategy, even as they instituted a far-reaching and comprehensive military reform process that affected everything from recruiting (a largely draftee COLAR became one-third volunteer, with key units essentially 100 percent “professionals”), to military schooling, to assignment policies, to structure, to operational art. The result was a reclaiming of the strategic initiative by the Uribe advent.”<sup>82</sup> The adaptation of the Colombian military coupled with the President Uribe’s strategic guidance and leadership has resulted in improved conditions in Colombia. Dr. Stephen Marks says, “The overall picture then, is one of a dramatically improved security environment. This has seen improvement in other indicators, the very intent of the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*.”<sup>83</sup>

Dr. Marks believes that Uribe’s strategic framework is both “correct and sustainable,” but long term success will depend on many variables.<sup>84</sup> There is no doubt that the insurgents will continue to use violence as long as possible and violence may actually increase in response to the state’s efforts. What is crucial is patience and adaptability to the ebbs and flows that are common to internal wars. Marks cautions about the difficulties democracies face in waging a successful counterinsurgency. The protracted nature of successful counterinsurgency campaigns and the disagreements that often emerge about strategic ends and means make it difficult to sustain a coherent national effort.<sup>85</sup>

Another factor which makes sustaining successful counterinsurgency campaigns difficult is finding successful measures of effectiveness (MOE). It is important to understand that certain statistics may be a misleading MOE. For example, the “body count” metric made famous during America’s involvement in Vietnam is certainly not a good measure. This MOE is analogous to the U.S. government’s metric of hectares of coca plants destroyed. You can count bodies and hectares of drug crops destroyed, but what ultimately matters is whether or not the insurgency continues and whether illegal

<sup>82</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for “Democratic Security,”* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), 3.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., 15.

narcotics are still readily available. “Progress, then, ends up being a state of popular mind, a belief upon the part of the populace (and its leaders) that the situation is improving.”<sup>86</sup> Marks believes this state of mind currently exists in Colombia thanks to Uribe and the actions of his administration.

The *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* has had positive effects in Colombia. Uribe astutely realized the need for a long-term strategic plan to restore security and democracy in a country torn by decades of insurgency and violence. Uribe is correct in his belief that security from the local to the highest levels is the necessary basis for restoring control and order. Luckily, the military and national police have stepped up to the daunting task and so far have adapted well. Dr. Stephen Marks, says:

What bears repeating is the point to which this analysis has returned often: the present effort is both correct and sustainable. It is the strategic posture required for progress and popular security. Hence continued care must be exercised to ensure that Democratic Security remains a multifaceted approach, a strengthening of the state—of its governance and finances—and of democratic capacity. These are carried out behind the ever more powerful and capable shield provided by the security forces. But they only enable the solution, which lies in the use of legitimacy to mobilize response against those using political violence to seek illegitimate ends.<sup>87</sup>

Marks is heavily in favor of Uribe’s actions under the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, but Uribe does have his critics as well. Some critics argue that Uribe has overemphasized “security” and “defense” at the expense of “democracy.” Nobody refutes that personal security has increased and violence has shown a sharp decline in recent years due to Uribe’s measures. It is argued that these improved conditions may only be temporary adjustments and the only true test will be steady progress measured over several years. Certainly one of the greatest benefits of the recent changes in Colombia has been the change in attitude of Colombians’ towards the conflict. Many people feel that Uribe is finally tackling the problem head-on and the country is more secure as a result.<sup>88</sup> Peoples’ perceptions about the conflict are changing and in an

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<sup>86</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for “Democratic Security,”* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), 3.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., 28.

<sup>88</sup> Vinay Jawahar, “Turning Point in Colombia?,” Rapporteur’s Report, Inter-American Dialogue (2004), available from <[http://www.thedialogue.org/publications/country\\_studies/colombia/cwg\\_june04.pdf](http://www.thedialogue.org/publications/country_studies/colombia/cwg_june04.pdf)>, accessed on 14 August 2005, 4.



insurgency that has lasted for over forty years, this change in attitude in itself is important. Uribe still faces mounting criticism over human rights issues and violations.<sup>89</sup> He will have to deal with the human rights issues if he is to be effective.

Other observers of the situation in Colombia say the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, is the first necessary step in the right direction, but insufficient. Ann Mason in her article *Colombia's Democratic Security Agenda*, says that Uribe's efforts will only be effective when his agenda reaches all facets of the of the institutional foundation of the state.<sup>90</sup> Mason believes progress must be made toward severing the links between the state's security forces and the paramilitary organizations. She also believes the policy places too much emphasis on counterterrorism and not enough on the fact this is actually an internal conflict. Mason goes on to say that Uribe must incorporate and engage a broader segment of civil society such as the Catholic Church, the NGO community, business, union leaders, and political parties.<sup>91</sup> Colombia does indeed need to institutionalize the change begun under the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* throughout all facets of the state and society over the long term.

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<sup>89</sup> Vinay Jawahar, "Turning Point in Colombia?," Rapporteur's Report, Inter-American Dialogue (2004), available from <[http://www.thedialogue.org/publications/country\\_studies/colombia/cwg\\_june04.pdf](http://www.thedialogue.org/publications/country_studies/colombia/cwg_june04.pdf)>, accessed on 14 August 2005, 4.

<sup>90</sup> Ann Mason, "Colombia's Democratic Security Agenda: Public Order in the Security Tripod," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 34, no. 4 (December 2003), 405-406.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

## **IV. CASE STUDIES OF LATIN AMERICAN INSURGENCIES**

### **A. INTRODUCTION TO CASE STUDIES**

Experiences and lessons learned from insurgencies in other countries can be beneficial to understanding the current situation in Colombia and resolving its ongoing insurgency. Peru's *Sendero Luminoso* (Shining Path) movement and El Salvador's struggle against the Farabundo Martí Front for National Liberation, or FMLN, are two excellent cases that could prove useful in resolving the situation in Colombia. Though the insurgencies that ravaged these two Latin American countries (Peru and El Salvador) share parallels with Colombia, care must be taken not to extrapolate directly from one situation and apply it directly to Colombia, or vice versa. The situation in each of these countries is unique enough that a careful study of all of the causal factors of the insurgencies in each respective country is necessary to fully comprehend the complexities of each situation.

The intent of the case studies of Peru and El Salvador is not to analyze the situations in these two countries down to the minutest detail, but to look for similarities and valuable lessons learned. Not every observation will be applicable to Colombia; in fact many may not be applicable due to the uniqueness of the situations in each of the countries. What may also emerge is a "how not to" instead of a "how to" approach as a result of the case analyses. Peru and El Salvador were chosen obviously because they are Latin American countries, but also because they offer a glimpse at different methods of dealing with the insurgents. These two cases also offer a contrast in U.S. involvement. In El Salvador, the U.S. was heavily engaged with both economic and military aid. In Peru, the U.S. had limited involvement in combating the insurgents.

### **B. THE REVOLUTION IN EL SALVADOR**

The roots of the revolutions during the twentieth century in many Latin American countries can be traced back to popular claims for social justice and the more equitable distribution of wealth and power. Colombia and El Salvador are no exception. Colombia's troubles erupted during the period of *La Violencia* which was discussed earlier and simmered throughout the 1960s when the FARC was founded. El Salvador's guerrilla groups gained strength and prominence in the 1970s following a four decade

period of military rule and oppression. Like Colombia, El Salvador had many guerrilla groups with differing links to communist ideology. Realizing strength in numbers would be beneficial, the guerilla groups merged to form the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front (FMLN).<sup>92</sup> Like the FARC in Colombia, the FMLN emerged as the strongest revolutionary group in El Salvador and the main threat to the existence of the state.

In El Salvador, economic and political factors fed the revolutionary appetite of a disenfranchised peasantry. The growing economic disparity between the lower class peasants and the ruling landed-elite fed the discontent evident throughout the 1970s and 1980s. It is interesting to note that a great many of the revolutionary guerrilla leaders were (ex-)students from universities and were from middle class families.<sup>93</sup> A revolutionary consciousness emerged in the universities during this period. This was a phenomenon not exclusive to El Salvador, it occurred in many universities throughout the world. Violent overthrow of the oppressive government was promoted by these university students committed to Communist ideology. The Salvadoran military only added to the growing tensions in the country. The military had long been under the control of the elite ruling class in El Salvador and was often used to brutally suppress any opposition to the government. The military was often accused of “death-squad” tactics to crush opposition. For the most part, the military enjoyed immunity from prosecution for the wrongdoings of which many of its members were accused.

Another factor which disrupted the status quo in El Salvador was the influence of the Catholic Church in El Salvador, particularly the teachings of the Jesuits. The Church in El Salvador became an influential advocate of political and economic change in Salvadoran society. Many members of the clergy were outspoken critics of the government and condemned its oppressive methods. The clergy fought for reforms in favor of the working class and supported the right of the peasants to organize themselves to demand better wages and working conditions.<sup>94</sup> This brought down the anger of the

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<sup>92</sup> Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 211.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., 219-220.

<sup>94</sup> Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 96.

government and the oligarchy upon the clergy. Many members of the clergy were intimidated, arrested, tortured, and murdered by henchmen of the government and oligarchy. This attack on the clergy also included the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Arnulfo Romero in March of 1980.<sup>95</sup>

In late 1979, a “reformist” coup was incited by officers in the Salvadoran Military. “But the underlying purpose of its main organizers was to preempt leftist revolution by breaking the domination of a narrow landed oligarchy and incorporating democratic politicians and parties into a reformed political system alongside forward-looking representatives of the capitalist class.”<sup>96</sup> Ultimately the Salvadoran military was severely weakened by the coup because the traditional symbiotic relationship with the landowning class had been broken. The military was now divided into two factions, those who were “reformists” and supported the coup and those who still supported the old connections to the landed oligarchy.<sup>97</sup> The coup also weakened the government and resistance grew amongst the guerrilla factions now united under the FMLN umbrella. In 1981, the guerrillas planned a “final offensive” to oust the government, but failed to do so.<sup>98</sup> The Reagan administration, having just recently taken office, realized the weakness and vulnerability of the Salvadoran government and quickly renewed economic and military aid. U.S. aid and elections in El Salvador lent legitimacy to the government and in 1984 peace talks with the guerrillas were initiated. Unfortunately the peace talks failed to produce results.

In 1984, José Napoleón Duarte was elected president of El Salvador. He was the first civilian president of El Salvador in fifty-three years. “The Duarte years began with hope and ended with frustration for the president and his supporters.”<sup>99</sup> The war worsened during his administration and the economy also continued its decline. One positive development during Duarte’s administration was the sharp decline in human

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<sup>95</sup> Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 97.

<sup>96</sup> Hugh Byrne, *El Salvador’s Civil War: A Study of Revolution*, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1996), 53.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>98</sup> Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 211.

<sup>99</sup> Montgomery, 185.

rights abuses perpetrated by the government, mainly the military. In December 1983, Vice President Bush visited El Salvador and threatened to suspend U.S. aid if the human rights abuses committed by the government did not stop.<sup>100</sup> Discontent with the Duarte administration and his Christian Democrat (PDC) party led to the emergence of the right-wing Alianza Republicana Nacionalista (ARENA) party as the most powerful political entity in the 1989 elections.

The ARENA party presidential candidate was U.S.-educated, Alfredo Cristiani. On June 1, 1989, Cristiani took the oath of office and assumed the presidency of El Salvador.<sup>101</sup> Two days after assuming office, Cristiani proposed peace talks with the FMLN and representatives from both sides met in Mexico in mid-September to discuss procedures for the negotiations.<sup>102</sup> Subsequent talks were held in Costa Rica and the government demanded a complete cessation of hostilities, but was unable to provide guarantees concerning the safety of the insurgents. Other meetings were scheduled for November in Venezuela, but an attack attributed to government forces, on the headquarters of El Salvador's largest and most militant trade union (FENESTRAS), killed its secretary general and nine others.<sup>103</sup> This attack convinced the FMLN that the government was not serious about negotiations and in November launched a nationwide offensive that took the war to the capital, San Salvador, for the first time.

This second "final offensive" launched by the FMLN in November 1989 did not topple the government as was planned, but did achieve other lasting results. It exposed the weakness and vulnerability of the government and its forces. The offensive also showed that despite having the capability to mount such an attack, the FMLN lacked the strength to fully overthrow the government. A key event during the offensive was the murder of six Jesuit priest-scholars, their housekeeper and her daughter on the grounds of the Jesuit-run Central American University. The murders were carried out by a Salvadoran army unit which had been trained by U.S. military advisers.<sup>104</sup> "This single

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<sup>100</sup> Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 185.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 215.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid., 216.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid., 219.

act [the murders] would have an impact both within and beyond El Salvador that was at least as great as the offensive itself.”<sup>105</sup>

The murders and the offensive caused many members of the U.S. Congress to question funding and aid provided to El Salvador. International scrutiny over the situation in El Salvador also increased with pressure being placed on the Salvadoran government to negotiate a settlement with the FMLN. U.S. aid to El Salvador was eventually reduced and peace negotiations continued between the FMLN and the government of El Salvador throughout 1990 and 1991. On January 16, 1992, the Salvadoran peace accords were signed during a ceremony in Mexico City. “The final accords reduced the size of the Armed Forces; limited their role to territorial security; revised the education of officers and provided for the purification of the officer corps; eliminated the three security forces and replaced them with the PNC [National Civilian Police]; provided for judicial and electoral reforms; and addressed economic and social issues.”<sup>106</sup>

U.S. involvement in El Salvador has received mixed reviews; however the ultimate outcome of the conflict was a negotiated settlement. Four U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonels, studying as National Security Fellows at the Kennedy School of Government, analyzed U.S. involvement in El Salvador and wrote a report entitled, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*.<sup>107</sup> In this report, the authors are largely critical of U.S. actions in El Salvador. The article was written in 1988 which was prior to the negotiated settlement in 1992, yet they capture the crux of U.S. involvement in El Salvador.

El Salvador represented one of the longest U.S. military involvements since Vietnam to that date (throughout most of the 1980’s and early 1990’s). Congressionally capped at a level of fifty five trainers, the U.S. undertook a massive effort to transform and reorganize the Salvadoran armed forces from an organization which was on the verge of being defeated by the FMLN to one capable of combating the insurgents. The initial

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<sup>105</sup> Tommie Sue Montgomery, *Revolution in El Salvador: From Civil Strife to Civil Peace*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1995), 219.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 225.

<sup>107</sup> A. J. Bacevich and others, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, Inc., 1988), v

U.S. efforts in El Salvador were aimed at just preventing collapse.<sup>108</sup> The government was so weak and the military so inept, a victory by the FMLN seemed inevitable. The investment of U.S. money and training did enhance the capabilities of the Salvadoran military. “Structurally, ESAF [El Salvadoran Armed Forces] emerged as a force better suited for conventional war than for counterinsurgency. To be sure, tactical air support, heavy weapons, and battalion-size operations helped ESAF turn the tide in the war’s early desperate phase.”<sup>109</sup>

American efforts to reform the Salvadoran military only went so far. The U.S. was effective at drastically reducing “death squad” activity and reducing overt military intervention in the Salvadoran political process.<sup>110</sup> The U.S. was not as successful in its attempts to foster a more professional culture within the Salvadoran officer and NCO corps.<sup>111</sup> The military was now more capable, but the cultural changes which the U.S. advisers wished to institute in the Salvadoran military would not prove to have a short-term solution. The American advisers involved in El Salvador quickly realized the solution to the Salvadoran problem was not strictly military. Civic actions, civil defense, psychological operations coupled with a coherent program of social and economic reform were necessary elements of a long-term solution.

Despite the shortcomings and difficulties of U.S. involvement, the end result was a negotiated settlement between the rebels and the Salvadoran government. The rebels were not capable of violently overthrowing the government and the government was not able to completely suppress the insurgency. It was undoubtedly the massive U.S. assistance which kept the Salvadoran government from imploding during the insurgency. El Salvador, despite recurrent elections still struggles with the persistence of the upper class and military heavily involved in the political process.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> A. J. Bacevich and others, *American Military Policy in Small Wars: The Case of El Salvador*, (McLean, VA: Pergamon-Brassey’s International Defense Publishers, Inc., 1988), v.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. vii.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid.

<sup>112</sup> Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 287.

### **C. COMPARISON OF COLOMBIA AND EL SALVADOR**

As was stated in the introduction to this section, it is difficult to translate experiences from one country and apply them to another. The societal, cultural, political, economic, and myriad other differences truly make each situation unique. Still, there are lessons to be learned from the situation in El Salvador capable of application to Colombia. A comparison of the major differences between the situations in the two countries will provide a useful frame of reference when considering the lessons learned in El Salvador.

A striking difference between the two countries is size. Both geographic and population size are drastically greater for Colombia. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) factbook data for 2005 lists the population of Colombia at 42,954,297 and El Salvador at 6,704,932. Land mass for Colombia is 1,038,700 square kilometers and El Salvador is 20,720 square kilometers.<sup>113</sup> To put this in perspective, El Salvador is just slightly smaller than the state of Massachusetts and Colombia is just slightly smaller than three times the size of the state of Montana. El Salvador has one of the highest population densities in all of Latin America while Colombia enjoys a much lower population density. Using the 2005 numbers, Colombia has roughly 41 people per square kilometer versus roughly 323 people per square kilometer in El Salvador. Granted, the urban areas of both countries have much greater population densities than their respective rural areas. The numbers are just used to illustrate that it is probably much easier for Colombian insurgents to hide in the vast and sparsely populated rural areas of Colombia than it was for Salvadoran rebels to hide in a country slightly smaller than Massachusetts. Expanding and enforcing government control over these vast areas is obviously more of a challenge in Colombia especially due to the extreme ruggedness of its mountainous and jungle regions. It is in precisely these regions where the insurgents exist and thrive.

Another striking difference is the makeup and background of the guerilla leaders in each country. As previously mentioned the leaders of the FMLN in El Salvador were mostly from the universities and came from middle and upper-class backgrounds. These

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<sup>113</sup> The World Factbook online, available from <<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/>>, accessed 7 November 2005.



revolutionary leaders then sought out support from the peasantry in the rural areas. In Colombia, especially for the FARC, the same guiding principle does not apply to the leaders of the insurgency. “Colombia always provides a special case in one key regard: For the FARC guerrillas—largest of the three sixties’ groups—it is highly misleading to speak of urban, upper-class guerrillas trying to establish rapport with rural, lower-class peasants.”<sup>114</sup> The FARC always had and continues to maintain leadership from the peasant lower-classes. Wickham-Crowley in his book, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America*, says, “This theme recurs throughout this book because I must make very clear that the guerrillas and peasants typically came from profoundly different ‘social worlds,’ which made highly problematic the formation of ‘bridges’ between those worlds.”<sup>115</sup>

Violence is certainly prevalent in Colombia and El Salvador; however it seems to be more widely accepted and prominent in Colombian culture. There is even an epoch aptly named *La Violencia* which claimed over 200,000 lives in Colombia during the 1940s and 50s.<sup>116</sup> Colombia consistently ranks at or near the top of countries in the world for most violent crimes. Colombia ranks first in the world for murders per capita and kidnappings. It ranks second in the world for murders with firearms.<sup>117</sup> Gabriel Marcella in his monograph, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey from Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity*, says the following about violence in Colombia: “The amount of violent crime is extraordinary. Colombia’s homicide rate is three times higher than in Brazil and Mexico and ten times the rate of the United States and Argentina. Moreover, some 60 percent of all the kidnappings in the world take place in Colombia.”<sup>118</sup> Marcella goes on to quote Colombian General Enrique Mora as saying, “We Colombians have historically accepted living with violence.”<sup>119</sup> This propensity for violence may help explain why the insurgency has festered for over four decades.

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<sup>114</sup> Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 145.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., 17.

<sup>117</sup> Nationmaster online, available at <http://www.nationmaster.com/cat/Crime>; Internet; accessed 7 November 2005.

<sup>118</sup> Gabriel Marcella, *The United States and Colombia: The Journey from Ambiguity to Strategic Clarity*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2003), 21.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid., 22.

Inextricably linked with the violence in Colombia is perhaps the greatest difference between the situations in Colombia and El Salvador. This difference is the pervasiveness of narcotrafficking and other crimes perpetrated by the insurgents in Colombia. The Salvadoran rebels received support from countries such as Nicaragua, Cuba, and the Soviet Union. The Colombian rebels fund themselves through narcotrafficking, kidnapping, extortion, and other crimes. As previously mentioned, the estimates of revenue brought in by the Colombian insurgents via illicit means are astounding with figures reaching several hundred million dollars in annual income. In El Salvador, the rebels needed and actively sought out support from peasants in the rural regions and resorted to force when necessary. In Colombia, the insurgents coerce, extort, or just pay for support as necessary. The lines between the narcotraffickers and insurgents have blurred. It seems the guerrillas began their associations with the drug traffickers in the 1970s. This “marriage made in hell” began with the guerrillas initially furnishing security and transporting illegal drugs for the emerging drug cartels.<sup>120</sup> Now it is increasing difficult to distinguish between the guerrillas and the narcotics traffickers with the insurgents involved in every facet of the illegal drug trade.

Joseph R. Nuñez writes about the “Hobbesian Trinity” that plagues Colombia and complicates any attempt to resolve the ongoing dilemma. This unholy trinity is comprised of the guerrillas, the paramilitaries, and the narcotraffickers.<sup>121</sup> In El Salvador there was just the FMLN against the state. In Colombia there exist the two major leftist insurgent groups (FARC and ELN); the right-wing paramilitary organization (AUC), which emerged as a direct result of the state not being able to provide security throughout the country against the leftist groups; and the narcotraffickers. These additional actors only serve to complicate an already complex situation. Any attempt at negotiations or demobilization must include all of the major combatant actors in Colombia which are the FARC, ELN, and AUC. One of the major problems impeding success in Colombia is the blurring of lines between the ranks of the FARC, ELN, AUC, and the narcotraffickers. All of the major combatant groups have been linked to narcotrafficking.

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<sup>120</sup> Joseph R. Nuñez, *Fighting the Hobbesian Trinity in Colombia: A New Strategy for Peace*, (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2001), 6.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 2.

#### D. LESSONS LEARNED

Despite the differences between Colombia and El Salvador, there are lessons to be learned from the insurgency in El Salvador that can be applied to Colombia. Judging from President Uribe's actions taken under the auspices of the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, it appears Colombia is applying most of the lessons which will be discussed shortly. Unfortunately, it appears the United States is myopically focused on the counternarcotics side of the problem in Colombia, though it has recently loosened the reins to allow some monies to be used for "counterterrorist" activities.<sup>122</sup> This will be dealt with in more detail in the final chapter as well as conclusions and recommendations for both governments.

First and foremost of the lessons learned is that the insurgency must be fought and won by people and state of the applicable country. The U.S. provided a great deal of monetary and military support to El Salvador, but ultimately it was the Salvadorans themselves who brought about the end of the conflict. This also applies to Colombia in that the U.S. is providing vast amounts of aid also in the form of monetary and military. As previously mentioned, with the exception of some money and training allowed to be used for "counterterrorism" purposes, most of the aid is earmarked for counternarcotics efforts. President Uribe realizes that combating the insurgency is the responsibility of all Colombians. In the introduction to the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* he says, "Security is not achieved simply through the efforts of the Armed Forces and the National Police. This is an effort of the entire State and of all Colombians."<sup>123</sup>

Another lesson is that some form of negotiations with the combatants will be necessary. There will be a measure of give and take on all sides with all of the participants. In El Salvador, several attempts at negotiations were made throughout the conflict with many only providing a brief cessation to hostilities. It was not until the peace accords of 1992 were signed that major hostilities ended in El Salvador. The government of El Salvador was forced to make political concessions to the guerrillas and

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<sup>122</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for "Democratic Security,"* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), 3-4.

<sup>123</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense*, available from <<http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/Descargas/Documentos/Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf>>, accessed 13 July 2005, 7.

institute the reforms previously mentioned, namely reform of the military. President Uribe has “left the door open to negotiations with those who opt for democratic politics, provided they agree to a strictly enforced cease-fire.”<sup>124</sup>

What led to the negotiated settlement in El Salvador was essentially a military stalemate. Neither side was able to achieve a decisive victory over the other and in the interest of self-preservation, each party decided negotiations were in their best interests. We saw that the attempts at negotiations with the FARC in Colombia failed during the Pastrana administration, because the FARC was not really interested in a real negotiated settlement. The FARC used the *zona de despeje* which was conceded to it by the Pastrana administration as a base from which to launch attacks and further strengthen its power and reach in Colombia. Negotiations with the insurgents in Colombia will not be possible until the insurgents realize it is in their best interests to negotiate. As long as the insurgents feel that their existence is not threatened, they will not feel a need to negotiate. The Colombian government and people must make the insurgents believe that armed struggle is futile and self-defeating. In addition to Uribe’s “open door” policy for negotiations, the Colombian government must deliver on promises of political voice and personal safety for the demobilized combatants. Events like the assassinations of politically left leaders and politicians which took place in the 1980s would only serve to plunge Colombia back into the turmoil from which it is trying to emerge. The issue of negotiations will be dealt with in more depth in the final chapter.

Ernest Evans, a frequent contributor to *World Affairs* journal, wrote an article entitled, *El Salvador’s lessons for future U.S. interventions*.<sup>125</sup> In the article, he lists five major lessons to be learned from the U.S. involvement in El Salvador. The lessons are:

1. The El Salvadoran civil war demonstrated that in counterinsurgency campaigns allowing the foreign and local military and security personnel to engage in human rights violations such as the torture and killing of prisoners is totally counterproductive.

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<sup>124</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense*, available from <[http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos\\_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf](http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf)>, accessed 13 July 2005, 22.

<sup>125</sup> Ernest Evans, “El Salvador’s lessons for future U.S. interventions,” *World Affairs* (Summer 1997).

2. U.S. support for the democratization of El Salvador proved to be a plus in combating the FMLN.
3. The El Salvadoran war shows that in combating an insurgency it is wise to keep the number of foreign troops to a minimum.
4. If an outside power such as the United States wants to have any significant impact on an internal conflict like the El Salvadoran civil war, it must be prepared to undertake a long-term intervention.
5. Even in conflicts like El Salvador, where the United States is able and willing to sustain a long-term military intervention, there are very real limitations on what such an intervention can accomplish.

These lessons apply not only to policymakers in the U.S. and members of its armed forces; they apply to the Colombian government and military prosecuting the counterinsurgency.

Evans' first point is already drawing international scrutiny towards Colombia. Non-governmental human rights watchdog groups have criticized the U.S. State Department for certifying that the Colombian government is making progress with regard to human rights despite their own (State Department) human rights reports which point to collusion between some members of the Colombian security forces and the right-wing paramilitary groups (AUC).<sup>126</sup> The importance of respecting and upholding human rights is addressed in the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*. It says, "The strengthening of the rule of law requires not only effective institutions, active citizen participation and the prevalence of judicial norms which guarantee rights and liberties; it also requires the government to act in accordance with the law."<sup>127</sup> The U.S. government needs to verify Colombian compliance with mandated human rights provisions and

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<sup>126</sup> Connie Veillette, "CRS Report for Congress," *Plan Colombia: A Progress Report*, (2005), 12. For a more detailed account of the alleged human rights abuses committed by members of the Colombian security forces see the Center for International Policy memorandum entitled *Colombian human-rights groups make the case against a U.S. human-rights certification*, dated 29 July 05 available from <<http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/050729cip.pdf>>.

<sup>127</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense, available from <<http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/Descargas/Documentos/Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf>>, accessed 13 July 2005, 15.

withdraw support if evidence is found supporting the watchdog groups' allegations. As previously mentioned, human rights abuses were sharply curtailed in El Salvador after Vice President Bush visited in 1983 and threatened to suspend aid if the abuses by Salvadoran security forces did not cease. Colombia will never be able to establish legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens and the international community without addressing and solving the human rights dilemma.

The lesson of democratization that Evans mentions is valid in Colombia as well. President Uribe addresses the issue throughout the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*. The challenge for Colombia is instituting and restoring democracy to the regions where the illegally armed groups have eroded or replaced the legitimate authority of the state. Colombia is one of the oldest democracies in the Western hemisphere, but the inability of the state to provide effective security and control throughout its territory has limited democratic practices. The demobilized combatants must also be afforded the same guarantee of safety and democracy that is afforded to regular citizens. The assassinations of leftist political party members and leaders like those which occurred during the 1980s when the FARC established a political front called the Patriotic Union (UP), only undermines democracy.<sup>128</sup> A truly democratic Colombia with fair political representation will serve to discredit and undercut the legitimacy of the insurgents.

Minimizing the number of foreign troops (namely U.S. forces) fighting in Colombia also rings true. The caution applies to the host nation becoming over reliant on U.S. forces and essentially using them as a "crutch." In Vietnam, after the U.S. withdrew, the South Vietnamese were incapable of defending themselves without U.S. assistance. This was one of the main reasons that the limit of fifty five military personnel was placed on U.S. involvement in El Salvador. The same sort of public and political sentiment that prevented widespread U.S. participation in El Salvador exists today for U.S. involvement in Colombia. The U.S. involvement in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Global War on Terror has the military occupied and politicians leery of committing more U.S. troops in another country. Still, the numbers of congressionally authorized U.S. military and contractors is considerably higher in Colombia than it was in El Salvador. In

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<sup>128</sup> Angel Rabasa and Peter Chalk, *Colombian Labyrinth: The Synergy of Drugs and Insurgency and Its Implications for Regional Stability*, (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2001), 71.

2004, Congress doubled the number of authorized U.S. troops on Colombian soil from 400 to 800 and increased the number of authorized U.S. contractors from 400 to 600.<sup>129</sup> Without consideration to the respective population size of Colombia and El Salvador, this represents a significant higher number of American troops in Colombia versus the fifty five authorized in El Salvador. The majority of U.S. personnel however, are dedicated to the counternarcotics side of the equation.

There is no doubt that a long-term commitment to solving the situation in Colombia is necessary. The insurgency has continued for over four decades despite numerous attempts at reaching a military or negotiated solution. The insurgents are obviously committed to a long-term approach and to successfully counter them, the government of Colombia and the United States must also be committed to the same. More importantly, the peoples of Colombia and the United States must be willing to undertake a long-term commitment. Ernest Evans points out in his article, “As a people, Americans tend to be impatient and are quickly frustrated with long, drawn-out wars.”<sup>130</sup> Evans points to the increase in capability and ability of the Salvadoran forces to turn back the insurgents during the 1989 offensive as a result of the nearly ten year effort of advising, training, and equipping by U.S. forces. This is the sort of long-haul effort required to be successful in a counterinsurgency.

Evans last lesson points to the fact that the governments of Colombia, the United States, and the militaries of both countries need to realize the limits and limitations of a long-term military intervention. This is worth emphasizing because history has shown that successful counterinsurgencies have involved many other facets of state control, authority, and functions. It is evident by reading the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* that the Colombian government has at least begun to come to grips with this issue. At the root of the problem is the lack of the government’s ability to exercise its authority and provide security throughout its territory. This cannot be accomplished through military means alone. An effective and fair judicial system is necessary as well as a

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<sup>129</sup> Adam Isacson, “Congress Doubles the Limit on U.S. Troops in Colombia” (8 October 2004), Center for International Policy Online, available from <http://www.ciponline.org/colombia/041008cap.htm>, accessed on 14 July 2005.

<sup>130</sup> Ernest Evans, “El Salvador’s lessons for future U.S. interventions,” *World Affairs* (Summer 1997), 5.

properly staffed, trained, and equipped police force. The legitimacy of the government must be restored and the people must feel secure and confident that their government will provide for their security without unduly limiting their freedoms.

The U.S. intervention El Salvador was not a situation where everything went perfectly well, yet the insurgency was eventually brought to an end. The issues discussed above are worth considering and potentially applying to the U.S. aid being given to Colombia. Both governments must be willing to learn and adapt their approaches as necessary to meet the situation. If anything, insurgencies tend to be fluid situations which require constant analysis and adjustment to successfully combat. The successful formula will require a tailored blend of military, police, judicial, economic, social, and diplomatic means.

#### **E. THE SHINING PATH**

In the 1980's, *Sendero Luminoso* (*Sendero* or Shining Path) became one of the most ruthless terrorist groups in the Western Hemisphere. Sendero waged war on the Peruvian state, while professing to a version of Maoist philosophy tailored to the Andean areas where it aimed to control. The FMLN and Sendero's similarities only exist in the fact that each guerilla movement posed an extremely intense challenge to their respective governments and states. However, whereas the FMLN resembled previous Latin American guerrilla movements in important respects, in its ideology, strategy, and social base the Shining Path is more comparable to Cambodia's Khmer Rouge which occurred from 1975-1979. Sendero and the Khmer Rouge both attributed a fundamental role in the revolutionary process to political violence, and systematically terrorized and murdered not only military but also civilian opponents.<sup>131</sup> Descriptions of both organizations highlight an unusual combination: emotional rage and total confidence of their own morality against a pervasively corrupt society—joined with a tightly disciplined, well-controlled military organization.<sup>132</sup> It is important to emphasize the violent nature of *Sendero Luminoso* as it is comparable to that of the Khmer Rouge; however, what is

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<sup>131</sup> Cynthia McClintock. *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 63.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.



important to this thesis is to identify similarities and differences between the Shining Path of Peru as they pertain to the FARC of Colombia.

In Colombia and Peru preconditions existed that were conducive to the emergence and expansion of a revolutionary insurgency. Widespread poverty, unequal land distribution, large disparities in wealth, internal displacement, and an incomplete democratic system to address these problems form the primary framework in which the FARC and Sendero established and maintained their grip in their respective countries. In contrast to Colombia, political variables in Peru were less significant in the development of the insurgency. Analysts of the Shining Path agree that political exclusion was not a factor in Peru's revolutionary equation. David Scott Palmer argues:

Sendero did not grow out of the national context of systematic and official repression or a systematic thwarting of opportunities for access to national politics...Democracy should have been a major bulwark against the advance of Shining Path in Peru.<sup>133</sup>

Free and fair elections took place in Peru, and there was considerable civilian control over the military. Instead, the stimulant for revolution in Peru was the economic crisis. Although Palmer contends Sendero's initial organization and growth occurred during "an extended period of economic growth and government expansion (1963-1975)," there remained an enormous disparity between the urban and rural areas.<sup>134</sup> Land scarcity and distribution remained a huge problem among the peasantry and the most negative trend during the 1970's. The peasants did not fair well when it came to equal distribution which caused considerable resentment towards the Peruvian government. In fact, among families who owned land, an overwhelming 83 percent of Peruvian families held fewer than five hectares; during this period the land distribution in Peru was the most unequal among fifty-four nations for which data were reported.<sup>135</sup> Another contributing factor to the growth of Sendero's influence in the peasantry is attributed to a severe decline in living conditions. McClintock claims that "a subsistence crisis" ravaged Peru's southern highland peasants during the 1970s and 1980s where conditions approximated famine; there were reports of consumption of as little as 420 calories per day; news reports documented cases of peasants

<sup>133</sup> David Scott Palmer, Ed., *The Shining Path of Peru*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 253.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>135</sup> Cynthia McClintock. *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 168.

selling their children for \$25.<sup>136</sup> Interviews conducted by McClintock or her research teams in Peru revealed startling evidence of hunger within the peasantry as they expressed rage and despair about it:

Here, they've forgotten us. There's no help. Exactly the opposite—the cost of everything has risen too much, and that's not the way to help. They're killing the poor people.<sup>137</sup>

The anger among the peasantry enabled Sendero to channel the hatred of the population and provoke the movement. Like the FARC, many of the youth joined the insurgency because they resented the state, they hoped for a better life for themselves and their families, and they believed that Sendero could end the injustices sustained by the government. However, the economic conditions continued to deteriorate at the end of the 1980s and the early 1990s which furthered the cause of Sendero.

In comparison to the FARC, *Sendero Luminoso* was organized into a hierarchical structure and led by one man: former philosophy professor Abimael Guzman Reyonoso, known by his followers as “*Presidente Gonzalo*.” His dominant personality and authoritarian leadership style exemplified the organization's violent nature with its ability to destroy both urban and rural organizations in its quest for power in Peru. Although the Shining Path was founded by Guzman and originated in the late 1960's, the guerrilla movement recruited and expanded for much of the 1970's before mounting their armed offensive on the Peruvian state in May 1980.

In contrast to the FARC, the majority of Sendero's leadership was educated in universities and came from the middle or upper middle class. In fact, like Guzman, many of the Sendero leaders were professors, schoolteachers or other professionals themselves and comprised the inner circle of the Shining Path which began to mobilize at the University Nacional de San Cristobal de Huamanga. Sendero's hierarchical organizational structure, which resembled the majority of revolutions in Latin America, initially limited their ability to recruit in the rural areas because the guerrillas and

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<sup>136</sup> Cynthia McClintock. *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 183.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

peasants typically came from profoundly different “social worlds.”<sup>138</sup> Some argue that university students from rural backgrounds who lived in cities, not peasants, were more susceptible to Guzman’s rhetoric than those living in remote jungles and highlands. However, Guzman was regarded like a “god” by his followers, who themselves behaved like disciples; Sendero assumed an almost cult-like identity.<sup>139</sup> Because Guzman was placed on a pedestal and worshipped by his followers, the organization sustained a devastating blow when their “god” was captured in September 1992. His iron rule of *Sendero Luminoso* came to an end after twenty-two years and to many of his followers, the capture of their godlike figure simply revealed an ordinary mortal. “Not only was Sendero’s strategic capacity crippled, but also its mystique was almost destroyed.”<sup>140</sup> On the other hand, the majority of the founding members of the FARC, including their leader *Tiروفijo*, were born into peasant families who worked as farmers in the coffee growing regions of Colombia and banded together in the rural areas near the central Magdalena River valley. These origins, according to Wickham-Crowley, made it unnecessary for the FARC to “bridge” the gap with the guerrillas and rural peasants because they were of the peasantry.<sup>141</sup> Thus, recruitment and support for the FARC was much easier in the rural areas. The discussion of the FARC’s organizational structure described in chapter one may be hierarchical like Sendero’s, but *Tiروفijo* is not regarded as a “god” by his followers and many strategic decisions are made by his Secretariat or General Staff. Therefore, eliminating or capturing *Tiروفijo* would not have the same impact on the FARC that capturing Guzman did on Sendero. The FARC, with its numerous factions, would continue to have a strong presence and operational capability in Colombia.

The FARC and Sendero follow similar ideologies with a few differences that are noteworthy. The FARC adhere mostly to a Marxist-Leninist ideology much like the FMLN, while Sendero’s was mostly Maoist. Guzman claimed that his ideology was the “fourth sword of Marxism,” a doctrine that was heir to Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism

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<sup>138</sup> Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, *Guerrillas & Revolution in Latin America*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 145.

<sup>139</sup> Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador’s FMLN & Peru’s Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 64.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid.

<sup>141</sup> Wickham-Crowley, 145.

but distinct from them.<sup>142</sup> Guzman's Maoist strategy for winning power in Peru included three key phases of guerrilla war: first, "defensive"; then, "equilibrium"; and finally, "offensive."<sup>143</sup> The idea was to remain in the rural areas to gain support and momentum before making a final push to the city of Lima which served as Sendero's final operational objective and a key element in the revolution's larger strategy of a protracted war. "To control Lima would be to control the country, and for Sendero, control over Lima would be won by controlling the countryside."<sup>144</sup> However, in 1988 Guzman chose to forgo the Maoist strategy of remaining in the rural areas until the time was right to move into the urban areas and made a hasty decision to prioritize the war in the cities, in particular Lima. Guzman's decision met resistance from within the leadership of Sendero. His wife, who led a faction of Sendero, and a top lieutenant named Osman Morote, argued that Guzman's strategy to move the campaign towards the cities was premature, contradicted Maoism, support in the countryside was insufficient, and that urban action would excessively expose the organization's leadership.<sup>145</sup> Guzman wanted to seize power in Lima and moved into the city. The decision proved futile as Guzman was captured in Lima in September 1992, and, as many analysts argue, ended the Shining Path. Although remnants of Senderistas still exist, the threat to the Peruvian state is minimal.

Alberto Fujimori officially became the President of Peru on 28 July 1990 and immediately restructured the Peruvian government's approach to handling *Sendero Luminoso* and the country's extensive economic problems. The paramount problem of terrorism had first to be addressed before widespread economic improvements would take hold and begin to function without the social, psychological and political distortions that Sendero caused.<sup>146</sup> In order to restore people's faith in the state's ability to govern,

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<sup>142</sup> Cynthia McClintock. *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 65.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid

<sup>144</sup> Gordon H. McCormick, *From the Sierra to the Cities: The Urban Campaign of the Shining Path*. (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 1992), v.

<sup>145</sup> McClintock, 66.

<sup>146</sup> Devin Finn, "Following the Shining Path of Peru to the Road Not Taken in Colombia" (October 2004), available from <<http://www.duke.edu/web/las/Council/wpapers/workingpaperFinn.pdf>>, accessed on 3 October 2005, 11.

protect, and perform social responsibilities a strengthened state security system was vital. Therefore, on 5 April 1992 President Fujimori adopted a hard-lined counterinsurgency plan in which he dissolved Congress and suspended the constitution, declaring that he needed a freer hand to introduce more economic reforms, combat terrorism and drug trafficking and root out corruption; he also purged the judiciary, dismissing 13 of 23 Supreme Court justices and dozens of other judges.<sup>147</sup> In what is termed an *autogolpe* (auto-coup or self-coup) against his own government, Fujimori wanted to increase his own power and control. Although there were mixed reactions from the international community, there was little initial domestic resistance of the *autogolpe*, in fact it was welcomed. Despite the complete illegality of his measures, public approval levels reached as high as 77 percent.<sup>148</sup> This support signaled the confidence that the Peruvian people were willing to place in the new president and a new system to counter terrorism; this faith directly countered the weak popular backing of Sendero in many areas and in some ways was perceived as legitimizing Fujimori's hard-lined response to the insurgency.<sup>149</sup>

In a government integrated strategy aimed at restoring order and authority in Peru, Fujimori used the lack of popular support for Sendero, amid public acknowledgement of the impact the insurgency was having on the country, and established *rondas campesinas* (peasant self defense groups). Fujimori armed over 500 peasant communities by the end of 1992, recognizing the advantage of arming, training and maintaining military control over the "peasants' natural self-interests."<sup>150</sup> The military was encouraged to develop a more cooperative and trusting relationship with the peasants. However, the establishment of the *rondas* met some resistance from military officers who feared the peasants actual motives. Many officers feared that the peasants did not actually oppose Sendero, and might use their weapons against the military instead of fighting the insurgents. Additionally, analysts feared the *rondas* may use their weapons against other

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<sup>147</sup> Roy Davies, "The Rise and Fall of Alberto Fujimori: Biography of the President of Peru 1990–2000," available from <<http://www.ex.ac.uk/~RDavies/inca/fujimori.html>>, accessed on 17 October 2005.

<sup>148</sup> Devin Finn, "Following the Shining Path of Peru to the Road Not Taken in Colombia" (October 2004), available from <<http://www.duke.edu/web/las/Council/wpapers/workingpaperFinn.pdf>>, accessed on 3 October 2005, 28.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. 26.

communities thus eliminating each other, or becoming easy targets for Sendero to wipe out. In the end, Fujimori prevailed in what he argued was “the peasants right to defend themselves;” and the realization that the Peruvian government and military needed to use the peasants in the war against Sendero or lose crucial leverage in the countryside—the real battleground—to the insurgents.<sup>151</sup> Insurgent activity declined from 1992 onwards, and Fujimori took credit for this development, claiming that his campaign had largely eliminated the terrorist threat.

The methods used to eliminate *Sendero Luminoso* in the various towns and cities came under much criticism. Critics argue the Peruvian military indulged in widespread human rights abuses, and that the vast majority of the victims were poor highland peasants caught in the crossfire between the military and the insurgents. The final report of the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission, published on 28 August 2003, revealed that while the majority of the atrocities committed between 1980 and 1995 were the work of the Shining Path, the Peruvian armed forces were also guilty of having destroyed villages and having murdered peasants, whom they suspected of supporting the insurgents. According to the report, although the greater percentage of deaths caused by the armed forces occurred during previous government, 69,280 people were killed or disappeared as a result of political violence; the peasantry was “the principal victim of the violence.”<sup>152</sup> During the Fujimori administration the numbers decreased, with a shift in tactics away from general butchery and toward isolating support for the terrorists, with Army engineers building rural roads and schools. Critics remained skeptical on the progress of decreased human rights violations during his tenure.

Under Fujimori, the long-overdue judicial reform was finally achieved—but the reform was a double-edged sword, shifting policies against the rights of the accused and in favor of the state, and in particular the military, to such a degree that democratic principles were violated.<sup>153</sup> Fujimori’s judicial reforms swung from the extreme of

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<sup>151</sup> Devin Finn, “Following the Shining Path of Peru to the Road Not Taken in Colombia” (October 2004), available from <<http://www.duke.edu/web/las/Council/wpapers/workingpaperFinn.pdf>>, accessed on 3 October 2005. 26

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., 10

<sup>153</sup> Cynthia McClintock. *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador’s FMLN & Peru’s Shining Path*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 149.

incapable and ineffective to the extreme of prosecuting everyone suspected of supporting the insurgency, including many who had no association with Sendero. Additionally, those accused of committing crimes of terrorism in Peru would be tried in civilian courts where the judges would be “faceless” [anonymous]. This was an appropriate measure in order to ensure protection of the judges from any reprisals that might occur. However, the pendulum may have swung too far; of an estimated five thousand persons jailed for crimes of terrorism since 1992, an estimated 30 percent or more were actually innocent.<sup>154</sup> Despite human rights violations that might have occurred, the elimination of Sendero provided a secure environment that allowed Fujimori to enact economic reforms.

Fujimori’s bold and risky economic reform known as the “*fujishock*” plan enabled Peru to return to the good graces of the international community and were widely considered successful. Under his “*fujishock*” plan, he eliminated subsidies, reduced tariffs, reformed the tax structure and negotiated a \$2.1 billion financial package with the International Monetary Fund and World Bank; an astounding accomplishment due to the significant difficulties with the international financial community he inherited from his predecessors including an inflation level that had reached 7000 percent in 1990.<sup>155</sup> Analysts argue that the significant gains in the economic situation can be attributed to security improvements to the environment which included the elimination of *Sendero Luminoso*.

The United States viewed Fujimori’s plan as authoritarian and extremely unorthodox. In fact, while visiting the U.S. in search of financial aid, Fujimori was told that Peru must adopt a “relatively orthodox economic strategy” and stabilize hyperinflation before being permitted re-entrance into international financial community, meaning that these policies would have to be implemented prior to the granting of any international aid to Peru; and Fujimori’s meeting with IMF, World Bank, and Inter-American Development Bank officials yielded similar results.<sup>156</sup> The U.S. and

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<sup>154</sup> Cynthia McClintock. *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador’s FMLN & Peru’s Shining Path*, (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 149.

<sup>155</sup> Devin Finn, “Following the Shining Path of Peru to the Road Not Taken in Colombia” (October 2004), available from <<http://www.duke.edu/web/las/Council/wpapers/workingpaperFinn.pdf>>, accessed on 3 October 2005, 10.

international community explained to Fujimori that if adjustments were made using their recommendations, these groups would help Fujimori and fully support him through financial aid.

## **F. CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED**

In Colombia and Peru, guerrilla forces found preconditions in each country that enabled them to ignite revolutions with the ultimate goal formulated to overthrow the current regime and impose their own form of government. In the cases of Colombia and Peru, insurgents found and perceived a weakened state apparatus which ultimately permit an attack on the state. There is a clear correlation between the timing of the economic decline in Peru's cities and the revolutionary movement's expansion which also applies to the situation in Colombia. Insurgents reason that chipping away—through attacks on civilians, infrastructure and armed forces—at the institutional framework that supports poverty, corruption and socioeconomic disparities will weaken or at least pressure governments to react and thus force societal change.<sup>157</sup>

Government responses vary with the nature of the insurgencies and the circumstances that permit their development—economic and societal conditions, the regime type in power and the level of popular support for the government and the guerrillas.<sup>158</sup> In Peru the government was able to enact economic reforms *only* after it had waged a sufficient campaign against the guerrillas and begun restoring people's faith in the security situation. Fujimori relied on the military to bolster an aggressive response to the insurgency and later a team of elite technocrats to configure an economic plan that ensured Peru's *reinsertion* into the international financial system.

Under Fujimori, an important aspect in the path towards peace was the enactment of judicial reform commensurate to the Sendero threat. Previous administrations bolstered a miserable conviction rate of only 5 to 12 percent of those being tried for

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<sup>156</sup> Samantha Newbold, "The Fujishock: How and Why Did It Occure? An Analysis of Alberto Fujimori's Policy Reversal of 1990," available from <<http://www.georgetown.edu/sfs/programs/clas/Pubs/entre2003/Fujishock.html>>, accessed on 7 December 2005.

<sup>157</sup> Devin Finn, "Following the Shining Path of Peru to the Road Not Taken in Colombia" (October 2004), available from <<http://www.duke.edu/web/las/Council/wpapers/workingpaperFinn.pdf>>, accessed on 3 October 2005, 1.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., 3.



terrorist acts compared to Fujimori's 97 percent conviction rate.<sup>159</sup> Prior to Fujimori's judicial reform and similar to the case in Colombia, judges were bribed or intimidated by the guerrillas which resulted in less convictions. However, as mentioned above, the pendulum may have swung too far with convictions going from negligible to near total under Fujimori's judicial reform. In order to avoid human rights violations that haunted his administration, a judicial reform such as Fujimori's must be fair, just, and without unduly limiting freedoms.

Another significant lesson learned in the Peruvian case against Sendero can be attributed to the establishment of *rondas*: armed peasant self-defense patrols in the countryside. The *rondas* enhanced the protection of civilians that were susceptible to extortion, coercion, or murder at the hands of Sendero. McClintock argues: "To a greater degree than virtually any other Latin American revolutionary movement, the Shining Path sought to eliminate civilians whom it decided were standing in its way and whom it could charge, justifiably or not, with corruption."<sup>160</sup> She continues: "Although the Peruvian *rondas* were not without their flaws—and the relationship between the peasant *ronderos* and the military sponsors of the *rondas* has not always been clear—in most analysts' judgments they were on balance very helpful."<sup>161</sup> The underlying principle of the *rondas* is that it placed the onus on and entrusted the communities to oppose the advocates of violence. Colombia instituted a similar strategy with the establishment of the *Soldados de mi Pueblo* ("Home Guards") that established state presence in affected areas. Local forces had all the more impact, because the police, using the same approach, systematically established presence in every *municipio* (county) in the countryside.<sup>162</sup>

The final lesson learned that can be attributed to the Peruvian case against Sendero is that human rights violations, right or wrong, must be avoided in a necessary attempt to restore governmental legitimacy in the eyes of the population. Under

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<sup>159</sup> Cynthia McClintock, *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 309.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, 311.

<sup>162</sup> Thomas A. Marks, *Sustainability of Colombian Military/Strategic Support for "Democratic Security,"* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2005), vi.

Fujimori, the burden was placed in the hands of the military and police to combat the insurgency in the countryside. A person who was suspected of having *any* affiliation with Sendero was likely guilty until proven innocent. Numerous atrocities occurred against innocent bystanders sparking human rights violations that plagued Fujimori's administration. The following quote is from a Peruvian officer summarizing his approach towards the insurgents:

Human rights violations often stem from a combination of frustration and fear. Say I'm an officer and I have a battle with Shining Path and I arrest 15 guerillas....I know that if I take them to the judge, they're going to go in one door and out the other, because the justice system doesn't work. Then, I know that while they're in custody they're going to start claiming "human rights" and they might say something that would screw up my career. And finally, I know that Shining Path believes in revenge, and if I send these people to jail they might come after my children, my wife, or me. So I kill everybody. No witnesses.<sup>163</sup>

This quote summarizes the paradox that many people involved in counterinsurgency operations face. On the one hand the insurgents must be rooted out and eliminated, but on the other hand you have to provide security for the population while protecting human rights. The option the officer above chose eliminated insurgents, but undermined the confidence of the population and the legitimacy of the government. Actions such as this are simply counterproductive to a counterinsurgency campaign.

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<sup>163</sup> Cynthia McClintock. *Revolutionary movements in Latin America: El Salvador's FMLN & Peru's Shining Path* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998), 146.

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## V. ANALYSIS OF COLOMBIA'S COUNTERINSURGENCY CAMPAIGN: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The case studies have highlighted lessons learned which bear consideration when examining the insurgency in Colombia. The essential ingredient in a counterinsurgency seems to be an effective and well administered strategy that is pervasive from the top levels of government down to the grass-roots level. This chapter analyzes Colombia's counterinsurgency campaign through the application of a counterinsurgency model and by applying "best practices" gleaned from successful counterinsurgencies throughout history. A cautionary note here is essential. As was mentioned in the case studies chapter, it can be dangerous to oversimplify situations when applying lessons learned or when using a model to draw conclusions. Conditions tend to be so unique in each situation that the extrapolation of ideas and conclusions from that particular situation to another can be tricky. Anthony Cordesman in his work, *Rethinking the Challenge of Counterinsurgency Warfare: Working Notes*, cautions about the complexity and instability of counterinsurgency operations. Cordesman says, "[We] can learn from past cases, but need to focus on the case at hand."<sup>164</sup> He also says, "[We must] accept the fact that situation is usually truly complex, and very country, time, threat, and ally specific."<sup>165</sup> Nevertheless, the application of models and practices from successful counterinsurgencies can prove beneficial so long as the differences and complexities of each situation are kept carefully in mind.

### A. COUNTERINSURGENCY MODEL

The following counterinsurgency model is taken from the article entitled, *Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency* by John A. Lynn; and the insurgency model figures and narratives describing the model are taken from this article.<sup>166</sup> Lynn's model captures the essential concepts of insurgency and counterinsurgency and effectively illustrates the

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<sup>164</sup> Anthony Cordesman, Center for Strategic and International Studies Online, "Rethinking the Challenge of Counterinsurgency Warfare: Working Notes" (7 November 2005), available from <[http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/051107\\_counterinsurg.pdf](http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/051107_counterinsurg.pdf)>, accessed on 8 November 2005, 2.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (July-August 2005), available on <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/JulAug05/lynn.pdf>>, accessed on 25 August 2005.

interplay between the insurgents, counterinsurgents and their mutual ultimate objective; control of the population. Lynn's caution about using historical cases is similar to Cordesman's. Lynn says, "The past does not supply us with rules, but it does alert us to important issues and dynamics. The past can never substitute for knowledge of the current challenge, but it can help us interpret that challenge."<sup>167</sup>

Figure 4. shows Lynn's model of basic insurgency and counterinsurgency. "The model represents the country under examination as a box defined by geographic, ethnic, economic, social, cultural, and religious characteristics. Inside the box are governments, counterinsurgent forces, insurgent leaders, insurgent forces, and the general population which is made up of three groups: those committed to the insurgents, those committed to the counterinsurgents, and those who simply wish to get on with their lives."<sup>168</sup> Outside of the box are external actors which sometimes provide support to the insurgents or counterinsurgents. These external actors may be states or groups with a stake or interest in the situation.

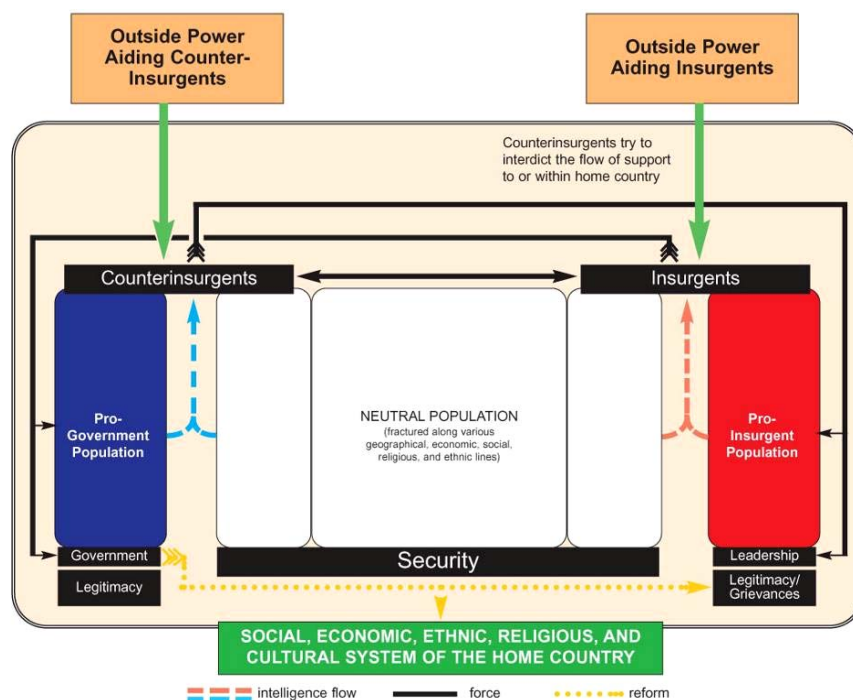


Figure 4. Lynn's basic pattern of insurgency and counterinsurgency.<sup>157</sup>

<sup>167</sup> John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (July-August 2005), available on <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/JulAug05/lynn.pdf>>, accessed on 25 August 2005, 22.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

The various arrows around the boxes represent the use of direct force, intelligence flow, and reform which flow to, from, and are leveraged by the various participants. The center population box represents the ultimate target of the insurgents and counterinsurgents, the neutral population. On either side of the neutral population are the populations which support the counterinsurgents (the state) and insurgents respectively. Naturally the population sizes of all three groups ebbs and flows as time progresses and varies proportionately to the success or failure of either side. The state and the insurgents battle for legitimacy in the eyes of the population. The insurgents often play upon grievances the population has against the state to erode the state's legitimacy. The insurgents also attack and undermine the security of the population to demonstrate the inability of the state to provide for the population.

Security seems to be the bedrock upon which the legitimacy of either side is based. "The contesting party—whether government or rebel—that best guarantees security wins the majority's support, however grudging."<sup>169</sup> Both sides have relative advantages and disadvantages over one another. The insurgents generally are at a direct force disadvantage. The insurgents must gain strength and support over time to directly challenge the state. The state normally begins with a force advantage, but also begins with an informational or intelligence disadvantage. It is very easy for the insurgents to hide amongst a supportive or even passive population. It is very difficult for the state to precisely know who the insurgents are, where they are hiding, and who is supporting them without greater popular support providing intelligence and information.

Indiscriminate acts of force by the state (raids, arrests, detentions) aimed at eliminating the insurgents without precise intelligence is extremely counterproductive to the state. "The use of violence leaves a deadly residue. Those who are harmed or whose family and friends have been victimized do not embrace the perpetrators of violence but harbor hatred and seek retribution against them."<sup>170</sup> Thus the foundation of an effective counterinsurgency strategy is not the heavy-handed application of force, but providing security for the population and instituting change to address grievances. This in turn

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<sup>169</sup> John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (July-August 2005), available on <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/JulAug05/lynn.pdf>>, accessed on 25 August 2005, 23.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 24.

provides a greater flow of intelligence and information from the population about the identity and whereabouts of the insurgents and their supporters. Once this intelligence is obtained then the “focused” application of force may be used to avoid victimizing the innocent and neutral population.

Outside actors generally provide support in the form of money and supplies but sometimes support is provided in the form of military advisers. Outside support to the counterinsurgents (the state) is of the type generally provided by the U.S. such as that provided to Vietnam and El Salvador. The most effective means of neutralizing this type of support is to turn sentiment in the supporting country (the U.S. in this case) against the intervention. This was the case in Vietnam when mounting casualties and costs eroded public support for the war. Outside support to the insurgents is normally in the form of supplies such as weapons and money. In some instances combatants from outside powers have fought on foreign soil as insurgents, though this practice is often self-limiting. Large numbers of foreign troops fighting on the side of insurgents is tantamount to an invasion, not an insurgency.<sup>171</sup> “Because outside aid for insurgents is primarily material support, the best way to stop it is by interdicting the flow of equipment, not undermining popular support within the outside power. This fight is more physical than political.”<sup>172</sup>

Figure 5. shows the model during a successful insurgency. Outside support to the counterinsurgents (the state) has eroded. Large-scale military actions and actions outside the law (indiscriminate use of force) by the counterinsurgents have undermined the legitimacy of the state. The state has ignored the grievances of the population and not instituted reform. The neutral population has swayed heavily in favor of the insurgents. Security for the population has eroded and the critical flow of intelligence from the population to the counterinsurgents has either severely decreased or been completely disrupted. The lack of intelligence only exacerbates the problem because the government must rely on unfocused large-scale attacks. A larger portion of the neutral population becomes victimized by these unfocused attacks and is driven into the waiting arms of the

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<sup>171</sup> John A. Lynn, “Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (July-August 2005), available on <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/JulAug05/lynn.pdf>>, accessed on 25 August 2005, 25.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

insurgents. The insurgents gain a force, intelligence, and support advantage because of the state's blundering and inability to apply an effective counterinsurgency strategy.

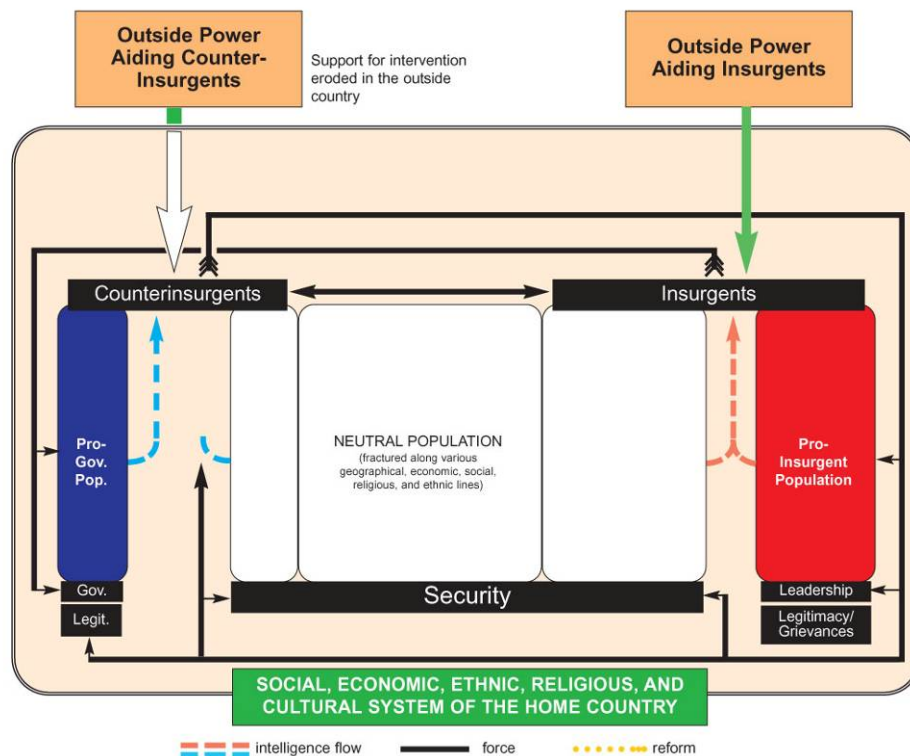


Figure 5. Lynn's model of successful insurgency.<sup>157</sup>

Figure 6. illustrates a successful counterinsurgency. In this depiction of Lynn's model, the counterinsurgents have managed to employ a strategy not only of military and police action, but one of reform which has addressed grievances of the population. This reform has bolstered the state's legitimacy and undermined the legitimacy of the insurgents. Providing security for the population has been the basis of this counterinsurgency strategy and the population rewards the state with increased popular support and the intelligence vital to conduct focused operations. These focused operations minimize noncombatant casualties and serve to foster public confidence in the state. The flow of outside support to the counterinsurgents has been interdicted and the insurgents receive less support from the greater population as well. The insurgents become more and more isolated as their support base dwindles. The insurgents are seen more as outlaws and outsiders and their numbers dwindle. Eventually they either



negotiate a settlement of some form with the state or may cease to function as an insurgent organization.

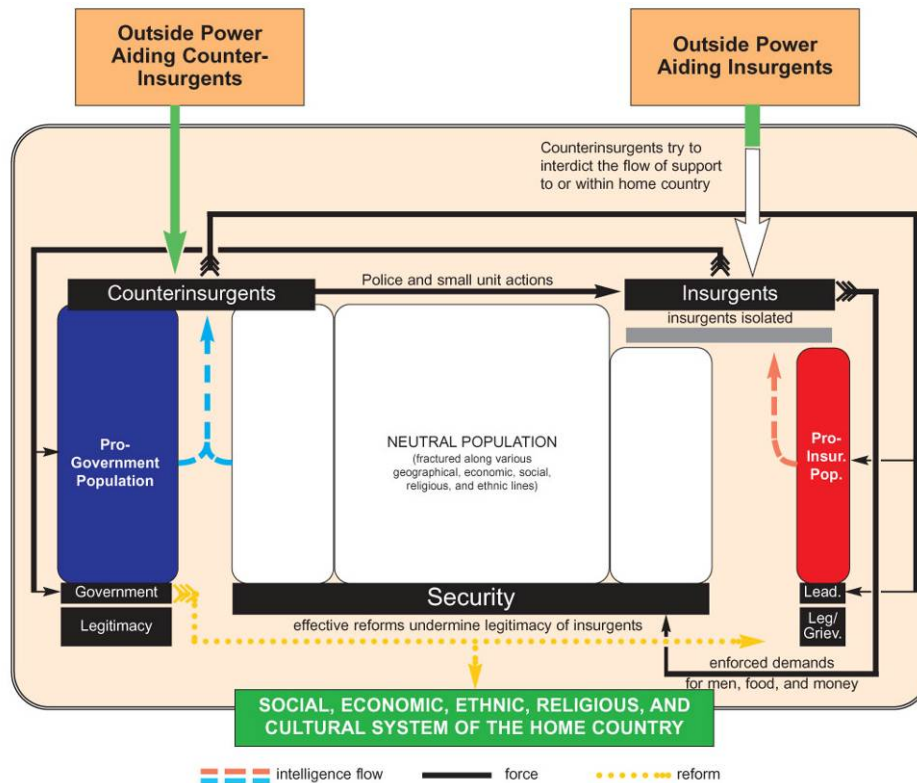


Figure 6. Lynn's model of successful counterinsurgency.<sup>157</sup>

## B. HOW COLOMBIA COMPARES TO THE MODEL

In the four decades prior to Uribe assuming the presidency in Colombia, the insurgency intensified from a small movement in the 1960s and finally reached its zenith during the Pastrana administration in the late 1990s. The insurgents were ceded a large demilitarized zone which they used to strengthen their position and grasp within Colombia. The model of successful insurgency in Figure 5. best illustrates the situation in Colombia during the Pastrana administration. Until *Plan Colombia* was enacted, very little outside support was provided to the government of Colombia. In fact, even after *Plan Colombia* became a reality, the majority of the aid was initially restricted to counternarcotics activities. The Colombian military prior to the Pastrana administration was largely incapable of conducting counterinsurgency operations. In the late 1990s, the Colombian military suffered many embarrassing defeats at the hands of the FARC. Government presence in the rural areas where the insurgents existed was minimal or

nonexistent. The Colombian government was focused on large-scale unfocused military attacks against the insurgents which served to drive a wedge further between the population and the state. The military's defeats did not bolster public confidence in the state at all. The government failed to address public grievances and did not institute effective reforms. Security of the population was abysmal as was evidenced by the huge number of insurgent attacks throughout Colombia.

Under Uribe and his *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, the tide has begun to turn towards Lynn's model of successful counterinsurgency in Figure 6. As discussed in chapter II, the military had begun transforming itself into a more effective counterinsurgency force. The policy has put the security of the population and the strengthening of state institutions at the forefront of government priorities. The government has instituted reform to address grievances of injustice and lack of governmental presence. The general population in Colombia feels more secure now than they have in quite a long time. Public confidence in the government and approval of Uribe's actions is extremely high.<sup>173</sup> The government's efforts to demobilize the right-wing paramilitaries have met with some success. The legitimacy of the state has been bolstered amongst the population and the legitimacy of the insurgents continues to decline as they continue their terrorist attacks on the population and key infrastructure. Though the FARC remains ideologically committed to its Communist underpinnings, the insurgents are seen more and more as outlaws and outsiders, especially with their ties to the drug trade. The Colombian government has begun providing security in places where it was nonexistent and establish trust with the population.

The single factor which seems to make the insurgency in Colombia unique from many other historical examples is the funding of the insurgents through the narcotics trade and other crimes. The FARC needs very little outside support since it is capable of generating an estimated \$332 million of income through illicit means, as noted in chapter three. Where insurgents in other countries relied heavily upon outside actors for money, weapons, and supplies, the insurgents in Colombia are more or less self-sustaining through their criminal activities. Fortunately, especially from the U.S. perspective, the

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<sup>173</sup> Connie Veillette, "CRS Report for Congress," *Colombia: Issues for Congress* (2005), Summary page.

same steps taken by the government to battle the insurgents should alleviate the narcotics issue as well. In fact, a strong stable government with excellent popular support will be much more effective at dealing with the illegal drug trade. Colombia's priorities are correct. Security and political stability come first; economic stability and curbing the illegal drug trade will follow.

### **C. SUCCESSFUL COUNTERINSURGENCY PRACTICES**

A government's counterinsurgency strategy is contingent on the nature of the revolution and the particulars to their country—economic and societal conditions, the regime type in power and the level of popular support for the government and the insurgents; a template simply does not exist. A successful counterinsurgency campaign like the one in Peru against the Shining Path or in El Salvador against the FMLN may not succeed in other countries; however, it is important to understand the nature of these insurgencies that may contribute to the development of successful operational practices that could be used in Colombia against the FARC. Root causes of insurgencies can be attributed to a variety of reasons, but the core problems revolve around a weakened state, loss of governmental authority, lack of security for the population, and the lack of an adequate state response to the effects of poverty; and to insurgents, perceptions of state weakness ultimately permit an attack on the state.<sup>174</sup> In his work *Best Practices in Counterinsurgency*, Kalev I. Sepp, assistant professor at the Department of Defense Analysis, Naval Postgraduate School, addresses a historical view of government responses to revolutions during the twentieth century. Sepp suggests that if we were able to combine all the successful operational practices from a century of counterinsurgent warfare, the summary would suggest a campaign outline to combat present day insurgents.<sup>175</sup> Here is a list of successful and unsuccessful operational practices according to Sepp:

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<sup>174</sup> Devin Finn, "Following the Shining Path of Peru to the Road Not Taken in Colombia" (October 2004), available from <<http://www.duke.edu/web/las/Council/wpapers/workingpaperFinn.pdf>>, accessed on 3 October 2005, 1.

<sup>175</sup> Kalev I Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005, 8.

| Successful  | Unsuccessful   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on Intelligence.</li> <li>• Focus on population, their needs, and security.</li> <li>• Secure areas established, expanded.</li> <li>• Insurgents isolated from population (population control).</li> <li>• Single authority (charismatic/dynamic leader).</li> <li>• Effective, pervasive psychological operations (PSYOP) campaign</li> <li>• Amnesty and rehabilitation for insurgents.</li> <li>• Police in lead; military supporting.</li> <li>• Police force expanded, diversified.</li> <li>• Conventional military forces reoriented for counterinsurgency.</li> <li>• Special Forces, advisers embedded with indigenous forces.</li> <li>• Insurgent sanctuaries denied.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primacy of military direction of counterinsurgency.</li> <li>• Priority to “kill-capture” enemy, not engaging population.</li> <li>• Battalion-size operations as the norm</li> <li>• Military units concentrated on large bases for protection.</li> <li>• Special Forces focused on raiding.</li> <li>• Adviser effort a low priority in personnel assignment</li> <li>• Building, training indigenous army in image of U.S. Army.</li> <li>• Peacetime government processes.</li> <li>• Open borders, airspace, coastlines.</li> </ul> |

Table 1 Best Practices in Counterinsurgency<sup>176</sup>

Many of these “best practices” have been and can be applied to the current situation in Colombia and President Uribe’s ongoing struggle against the FARC.

A key component of a successful counterinsurgency operation is a charismatic, dynamic, and persistent leader willing to assume control of the government and implement a successful strategy. The requirement for exceptional leadership during an internal war calls for a leader with enthusiasm and imagination; and emergency conditions dictate that a government needs a single, fully empowered executive to direct and coordinate counterinsurgency efforts.<sup>177</sup> The Shining Path case study discussed in chapter four is a perfect example of a leader, Fujimori, who granted himself executive authority through his *autogolpe* to combat the insurgents. Although his hard-line approach was heavily criticized as extreme including numerous human rights violations and mass corruption, Fujimori’s approval rating soared as the population welcomed his

<sup>176</sup> Kalev I Sepp, “Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005, 10.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid., 11.

aggressive counterinsurgency approach. Fujimori's ability to wipe out *Sendero Luminoso* is indisputable. Alvaro Uribe has taken a hard-line approach against the FARC as well through his *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* that was discussed in chapter three. To reiterate, the general objective of the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* is to strengthen and guarantee the rule of law throughout Colombia, through the reinforcement of democratic authority.<sup>178</sup> In order to implement his policy, Uribe established the National Defense and Security Council which will be the forum where the President will liaise with his ministers, the armed forces, and the national police. The council will issue directives, supervise the implementation of each, and evaluate the results. Like Fujimori, President Uribe's approach faces criticisms of human rights violations, but many people feel that he is tackling the problem head-on and the country is more secure as a result.<sup>179</sup> President Uribe's approval rating has soared to over 80 percent in 2005, and the population's perception about the conflict is changing. In an insurgency that has lasted for over forty years, this change in attitude in itself is extremely important.

The first priority the Colombian government should focus on is the security and needs of the population. Sepp argues: "The security of the people must be assured as a basic need, along with food, water, shelter, health care, and a means of living; these are human rights, along with freedom of worship, access to education, and equal rights for women.<sup>180</sup> Devin Finn echoes this argument by stating: "Restoration of state security and protection of citizens is necessary before governments can begin to rebuild political and economic institutions and gain popular support.<sup>181</sup> The current aim of the Uribe administration is to disarm strategic actors and "simplify the conflict" in an attempt to

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<sup>178</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, *Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense*, available from <[http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos\\_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf](http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf)>, accessed 13 July 2005, 12.

<sup>179</sup> Vinay Jawahar, "Turning Point in Colombia?," Rapporteur's Report, Inter-American Dialogue (2004), available from <[http://www.thedialogue.org/publications/country\\_studies/colombia/cwg\\_june04.pdf](http://www.thedialogue.org/publications/country_studies/colombia/cwg_june04.pdf)>, accessed on 14 August 2005, 4

<sup>180</sup> Kalev I Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005, 9.

<sup>181</sup> Devin Finn, "Following the Shining Path of Peru to the Road Not Taken in Colombia" (October 2004), available from <<http://www.duke.edu/web/las/Council/wpapers/workingpaperFinn.pdf>>, accessed on 3 October 2005, 1.

restore people's faith in state legitimacy and institutions, and achieve a heightened degree of security through defeat of the insurgents. Uribe's top two strategic objectives according to his *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* include consolidation of state control throughout Colombia and protection of the population. Both objectives are aimed at driving the people away from the insurgents, and closer to the government. Ann Mason, professor of Political Science at the University of the Andes in Bogotá, argues that preliminary evidence suggests some progress has been made on the security agenda, however, Uribe must move forward aggressively to provide effective, and equal, protection of human and civil rights.<sup>182</sup> If the Uribe administration is serious about winning the hearts and minds of the Colombian population, then providing security for the people is an essential ingredient.

In order to protect the population from threats to its security there needs to be an emphasis on intelligence. Intelligence operations that help detect insurgents for arrest and prosecution are the single most important practice to achieve the goal of security.<sup>183</sup> As mentioned in Chapter III, Uribe's policy establishes a Joint Intelligence Committee to coordinate among the state's intelligence services. The idea is to consolidate strategic level intelligence, eliminate interagency turf battles, and eliminate redundancy. Additionally, regional intelligence committees will be set up at local levels to accomplish the same tasks down at the grass roots level. Sepp argues that at the community level, honest, trained, robust police forces responsible for security are a tremendous asset for gathering intelligence.<sup>184</sup> To bolster intelligence gathering capabilities, Uribe increased the size of the national police. The strengthening of the national police includes: extending coverage to more municipalities, increase of patrols in rural areas, the creation of new mobile Carabinero Squadrons, building and fortifying rural police stations, strengthening the highway police, creating regular auxiliaries, and promoting the work of and collaboration with civic police; all of which increase the capabilities of the police to gather intelligence. The creation of the Joint Intelligence Committee and the use of the

<sup>182</sup> Ann Mason, "Colombia's Democratic Security Agenda: Public Order in the Security Tripod," *Security Dialogue*, vol. 34, no. 4 (December 2003), 407.

<sup>183</sup> Kalev I Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005, 9.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid.

national police as information collectors improve the entire intelligence system at the strategic, operational, and tactical level.

The increased size and presence of the national police in the rural areas including their more expansive role as intelligence collectors also contributes to the practice of population control. Additionally, Uribe strengthened the role of the *soldados de mi pueblo* which enabled more soldiers from rural areas to perform their military service in their own regions; and this allows them to retain their links with the community and will strengthen the trust between the population and the security forces.<sup>185</sup> These “home guards” have a higher stake in providing security to the population of their *own* villages than a community from which they were not raised. A trusting relationship between the population and security forces will improve the transfer of information which could promote the capture of the insurgents. The objective is to keep the insurgents isolated from the population by all means possible because, according to Sepp, insurgents rely on members of the population for concealment, sustenance, and recruits.<sup>186</sup> In addition, the insurgents use the communities as sanctuaries in which to organize, plan, and execute terrorist attacks. The increased presence of the national police and *soldados de mi pueblo* and their improved relationship with the population denies the insurgents of these “safe havens” in which to mobilize.

The introduction of an effective, pervasive psychological operations (PSYOP) campaign could serve two purposes for President Uribe. On one hand, informational campaigns could explain to the population what they can do to help their government make them secure from terrorist insurgents; encourage participation in the political process by voting in local and national elections; and communicates directly to the peasants in the rural areas the governments intent on combating the guerrillas.<sup>187</sup> For example, something as simple as a radio broadcast, a flyer, or leaflets with an applicable “theme” could reassure the rural population that the government is acting in their best

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<sup>185</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense*, available from <<http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/Descargas/Documentos/Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf>>, accessed 13 July 2005, 38.

<sup>186</sup> Kalev I. Sepp, “Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005, 10.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

interest to provide security for the peasants in the local areas. On the other hand, another applicable “theme” could convince insurgents they can best meet their personal interests and avoid risk of imprisonment or death by reintegrating themselves into the population through amnesty, rehabilitation, or by laying down their weapons and simply not fighting.<sup>188</sup> In both cases, the goal for Uribe is to encourage the population to move towards the government and away from the insurgents. In the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, the government states that it will keep the public fully informed of developments in *all* areas relating to the policy in order to boost confidence and encourage citizen co-operation and *solidarity*.<sup>189</sup> However, caution must be taken when conducting effective psychological operations. The message conveyed to the population and insurgents cannot be “empty” words; and action must be taken to carry out the message’s intent. If the government states that amnesty will be provided for insurgent’s who stop fighting, then that’s what should occur. Failure by the government to take action on its words in a PSYOP campaign can severely discredit the administration and have negative consequences. A successful PSYOP campaign is an ongoing process in which the Uribe administration could conduct more aggressively.

The overall objective of the government’s strategy in counterinsurgency operations is to win the support of the population. As Sepp notes: “The focus of all civil and military plans and operations must be on the center of gravity in any conflict—the country’s people and their belief in and support of the government.”<sup>190</sup> Many counterinsurgency strategies focus on finding, capturing, and killing the leader(s) of the revolution. In the case of Peru and the Shining Path, the capture of Abimael Guzman dealt a crippling blow to the insurgency; however, the same strategy would not produce similar results in Colombia, since the FARC’s leadership is considerably more diversified. Based on the best practices discussed here, it is clear that Colombia is applying many of them through the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*.

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<sup>188</sup> Kalev I. Sepp, “Best Practices in Counterinsurgency,” *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005, 10.

<sup>189</sup> Ministerio de Defensa Nacional online, *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*, Presidency of the Republic-Ministry of Defense, available from <[http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos\\_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf](http://alpha.mindefensa.gov.co/descargas/Documentos_Home/Seguridad%20Democratica.pdf)>, accessed 13 July 2005, 60.

<sup>190</sup> Sepp, 9.



## **D. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

There is hope for Colombia. After decades of a seemingly interminable insurgency, President Uribe has put Colombia on the correct path towards recovery through the implementation of the *Democratic Security and Defense Policy*. The caution here is that his plan is necessary but not sufficient in and of itself. Based on the application of the counterinsurgency model and the best practices from past successful counterinsurgencies, Colombia seems to be applying the correct methodology towards solving this crisis. It has been repeated throughout this work that an effective counterinsurgency campaign takes time to truly be effective. President Uribe realizes this and has communicated it to the people of Colombia. His high approval ratings and the recent passage of legislation to allow a president to serve consecutive terms in Colombia means he will likely serve a second term and continue with his strategy. It is extremely important that the measures put in place by the current administration be allowed to work long-term. It is equally important that this policy be reevaluated and adjusted as necessary based on the evolving situation. The insurgents have shown remarkable adaptability to changing situations and the government must also learn to adapt as the situation warrants.

### **1. Recommendations for Colombian Policy**

The Colombian government must deal with the issue of human rights abuses head-on. The *Democratic Security and Defense Policy* emphasizes the importance of this issue and the government needs to follow through with its promise to uphold human rights and punish abusers. The failure to effectively deal with human rights abuses will probably undo any progress made and undermine the legitimacy of the government. Reform of the judicial system must also be carried out. This is a linchpin in restoring security and public confidence in state institutions. The demobilization of the paramilitary forces must continue within the framework of the law. Those guilty of crimes and human rights abuses must be punished within the limits of the law.

The military has begun the process of transformation to combat the insurgents. The Colombian government must follow through and ensure the transition from military to civilian control in retaken areas. Historical examples of effective counterinsurgencies have shown that an effective police presence supported by the military is crucial. As

noted in the *Best Practices of Counterinsurgency* by Kalev Sepp, successful strategies take place when the police are in the lead and the military supporting; and the police force has expanded and is more diversified.<sup>191</sup> Negotiations with and reintegration of the insurgents into society will be necessary. Uribe has left the door open for negotiations with insurgents who agree to a strict cessation of hostilities. Programs must be instituted to begin the process of reintegrating the combatants as functioning and contributing members of society. Steps must be taken to provide the same basic rights enjoyed by Colombians in general to the demobilized insurgents. Without a guarantee of safety and due process, no insurgent is going to be willing to lay down their weapons.

The Colombian government has taken the necessary first steps towards resolving the problem, but is still a long way from ending the conflict. The strengthening of civil institutions and governance in the rural areas must continue for the true underlying causes to be dealt with. The geographical and terrain limitations of Colombia's outlying rural areas intensify the problem of effective governance and security. The military and especially the police forces must become more mobile and adaptable to reach and work in these areas.

## **2. Recommendations for United States Policy**

The most important change to U.S. policy would be to shift priorities to put internal stability and security for Colombia as the highest priority. As discussed in Chapter III, the availability, price, and purity of illegal narcotics has not changed since the implementation of *Plan Colombia*. Proponents of the program point to the high numbers of hectares of coca that have been eradicated under *Plan Colombia*. This is perhaps the wrong metric to measure the success of *Plan Colombia* since it appears that drug production and easy availability continues despite coca eradication efforts. Perhaps the U.S. needs to look inward and focus on the demand side of the drug problem and not the supply side.

As an outside power, the U.S. cannot fight and win this war for the Colombians. The U.S. can play an important supporting role through monetary aid and other forms of

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<sup>191</sup> Kalev I. Sepp, "Best Practices in Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (May-June 2005), available from <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/cac/milreview/download/English/MayJun05/sepp.pdf>>, accessed 25 August 2005, 10.

assistance. The U.S. can vigorously support the Colombians in their efforts to deal with human rights issues. Further economic aid can be conditionally tied to strict compliance with human rights issues as was the case in El Salvador. Since the U.S. possesses a robust legal system, perhaps advisers from the U.S. with expertise in judicial matters can be sent to Colombia to aid in reforming its judicial system. Alternative development and crop substitutions would help draw some of the poor peasant farmers and laborers from the lure of coca growing. The U.S. can also assist and encourage negotiation efforts with the combatants to ensure guarantees of truth, justice, and reparations are followed through by all parties. The assistance spoken of here deals more with infrastructure and government presence than with assistance of a military nature. The U.S. needs to help Colombia help itself. The greatest U.S. contribution could be money that is not conditionally tied to counternarcotics efforts, but made available to establish and maintain the infrastructure that is critical to the state and providing security for its people. "In security lies the support of the majority and the environment in which a new and better state may emerge."<sup>192</sup> This "new and better state" will be better equipped and more capable of dealing with the issue of the illegal narcotics which are bound for the United States.

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<sup>192</sup> John A. Lynn, "Patterns of Insurgency and Counterinsurgency," *Military Review* (July-August 2005), available on <<http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC/milreview/download/English/JulAug05/lynn.pdf>>, accessed on 25 August 2005, 27.

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